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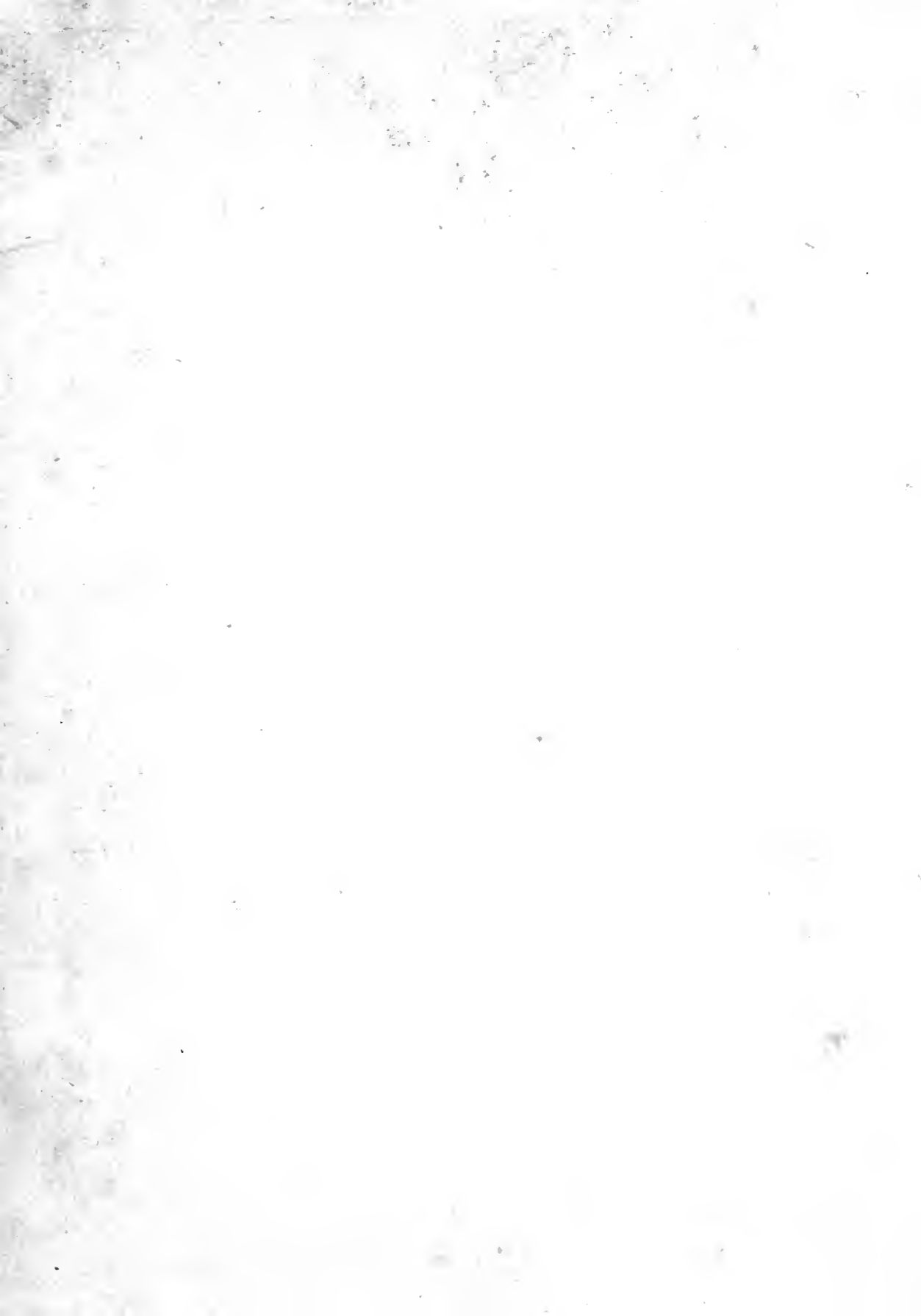
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THE OLD SURREY FOX HOUNDS







W. & H. Barraud, pinx.

Thomas Fairland, litho.

THE SURREY FOX-HOUNDS, 1839.

MORRIS HILLS ON PADDY. TOM HILLS ON LOUNGER. PECKHAM HILLS ON FACTOR.

THE OLD SURREY FOX HOUNDS

A HISTORY OF THE HUNT
FROM ITS EARLIEST DAYS TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY
HUMPHREY R. TAYLOR

EDITED BY
"G. G."—H. G. HARPER

*WITH COLOURED FRONTISPIECE
AND THIRTEEN OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS*

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PREFACE

THE reasons which have induced me to collect sufficient material, and to compile it in the form of a History of the Old Surrey Fox Hounds, may be briefly stated. They are, in effect, that, so far as I am aware, no previous attempt has been made in this direction, and that—in consequence of the inevitable and rapid expansion of the Metropolis bringing about (together with other causes) changes inimical to fox-hunting near London—the passing of the “Old Surrey,” as at present constituted, can only be a matter of time.

It would be infinitely to be regretted if the annals of a Hunt which has supplied so much sporting history should be allowed to lapse without an effort being made to preserve some record of its long career ; and with an ambition to fill this vacancy the following chapters have been prepared, with a due sense of their shortcomings.

The difficulties experienced in tracing the earlier details of the Hunt have not been small ; but, thanks to

kindly assistance received, they have, in a great measure, been overcome.

The illustrations are chiefly from old prints in my possession, and will, it is hoped, be of some additional interest.

In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation and thanks to those who have kindly tendered assistance, particularly Mr. Byron, Sam Hills, Tom Gilbert, and many others ; whilst I also wish to mention that any profit derived from the sale of this book will be devoted to the Hunt Servants' Benefit Society, particulars of which will be found at the end of the volume.

H. R. TAYLOR.

OAKLEIGH, CHEAM, SURREY,

July 24th, 1906.

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THE OLD SURREY FOX HOUNDS

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

A VIVACIOUS critic has remarked that "Surrey is not the Shires ; but," he added with a chuckle, "it is full of sporting thrills."

We may take that commentary as a genial working basis for this history. It is justified, according to our judgment, by the importance and unique interest of the issues involved. Whilst we make no pretensions that have not, at least, a respectable foundation or the support of accredited authorities, we recognize that our subject must be treated with great care; and its splendid traditions serve to give us infinite encouragement. Those "sporting thrills" are very enjoyable. If they only last!

Surrey is certainly not the Shires, and no such claim is made for it by its most ardent admirers. It is not a beautiful grass country (as regarded from a hunting point of view), with small gorse coverts and flying fences and all the glamour of "fashionable" associations. No, we are obliged to put up with plainer fare, with the minor ecstasies. We are, alas, a trifle deficient in speed at times, though not in stamina ; great "hunting" runs are more in our line.

The Old Surrey Fox Hounds

People do not speak of Surrey with rapture as a glorious "galloping" country. It is, let us admit, rather cramped, hilly in parts, and "provincial." Even so, it has supplied a great deal of genuine sport for centuries past, and its enthusiasm has never been allowed to grow dim. Such divine afflatus deserves to be suitably celebrated; and, if that be not done now, it is not likely to be done at all—chiefly, perhaps, on account of the expense. Hunting heroes, too, do not live for ever.

Natives of Surrey are proud of their sporting history. For hundreds of years past, sport has been of primary consideration here, especially hunting—though we must also remember that our greatest race, the Derby, is one of the local functions—and Surreyites have not been slow to take full advantage of their incomparable opportunities. They have usually been keen as mustard after fox. Their records, singularly quaint, vivid, and interesting, are surely worth preservation. Hence, we are pleased to step into the breach, armed at all points, so to speak, eager to score with both barrels, not necessarily shocked by the prospect of a "purler," and conscious that we are working in a noble cause—to wit, the cause of sport.

Hunting in Surrey is, as hinted, an exceedingly ancient institution. That its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity is conceded by more than one explorer who has tried to get at the heart of the mystery. For ourselves, we cannot go back further, with certainty, than about the year 1750, when a Mr. Gobsall—probably a citizen of credit and renown—had what are now the Old Surrey Fox

Hounds, keeping them (of all places in the world !) at Bermondsey. There, till comparatively recent times, traces of the old kennels and stables could be seen at a certain wharf belonging to Messrs. Dudin, two brothers, who were members of the Old Surrey Hunt in the "sixties" of last century. Their love of sport is not alleged to have been an obstacle in the way of their commercial success.

Whilst at this point we may mention that we communicated with Mr. John B. Dudin, now resident at Southsea, asking for any information which he may possess concerning the early history of the Old Surrey Fox Hounds. He has been kind enough to reply (under date of 13 December, 1905) in the following terms :—

"I am afraid that I cannot enlighten you very much on the subject of the early days of the Old Surrey Hunt, as they were even before my time, but the little I heard from my father I shall have much pleasure in imparting to you. In 1805-10, the kennels were at East Hall, Bermondsey, the residence of my father, Henry Dudin, whose property it was.* He pulled the kennels down to build stables, but I don't know if the hounds were then removed to Garston Hall or not. In those days they hunted in Peckham Rye and Forest Hill, and had to

* There is a slight discrepancy of a few years between Mr. J. B. Dudin's location of the kennels in Bermondsey as from 1805 to 1810 and the statements of other authorities, who place the kennels as being near to Godstone. The latter is, we think, correct. In our account (which appears in a subsequent chapter) of a run with these hounds in 1801—quoted from the "Sporting Magazine"—the fox is reported as having been killed at Godstone, "close to the kennels of his enemies."

leave off drawing at one p.m., so that the members might be on 'Change in the City at four p.m. Many of those City sportsmen had only time to cover their hunting dress with long coats. The hunt dress was green, of an old-fashioned cut, and a beaver top hat; only a few sported pink. The Master at that time was Maberly, of Oxford Street, coachbuilder, I fancy, to George III. . . . The Peabody Trust bought the East Hall estate, which is now, I think, covered with model dwelling-houses, so that there can be no part of the Old Surrey kennels remaining in Bermondsey now."

So as to clear the ground and place before the reader a succinct account, in chronological order, of the history of these hounds ere we attempt to erect the superincumbent edifice, we now append the following synopsis of essential facts:—

In 1800 and during the latter part of the previous century Mr. Snow was Master of these hounds. He was a very estimable citizen, who found his chief pleasure in hunting, and the kennels were then kept near to Godstone. (*See note on page 3.*)

1808–12.—Colonel the Hon. G. Nevill was Master, and showed capital sport. Reported to have been a very keen riding man. The kennels were the same as in Mr. Snow's time.

1812–20.—Mr. Maberly took over the Mastership during this epoch, and he seems to have earned a general popularity. He rode to hunt, so far as we can learn, instead of hunting to ride, a result being that his followers



Geo. Romney, pinx.

HON. GEORGE NEVILL
SECOND SON OF GEORGE EARL OF ABERGAVENNY
MASTER 1808-1812

enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content. The kennels were then at Shirley, near Croydon.

1820-36.—Mr. Daniel Haigh, of Tooting, was Master, and a good Master too. We reproduce—from a print in possession of the author—a portrait of Mr. Haigh on a favourite hunter. The hounds were then kept at Chels-ham, a very rural village, about three miles from Croydon, and the present “Kennel Farm” remains as a memento of the site of the old kennels, stables, etc.

1836-43.—Sir Edmund Antrobus, of Cheam, reigned at the head of affairs, assisted (in 1840) by Colonel Cator, both first-rate men to hounds. The kennels were then removed to Garston Hall, an interesting old house in the parish of Coulsdon, where they have remained ever since—certainly a fine line of continuity in that respect.

1843-47.—Sir Edmund Antrobus was assisted in the Mastership by Mr. John Castendeick and Mr. W. Mortimer, the last-mentioned gentleman taking command in the field when Sir Edmund was not out, and the arrangement worked very satisfactorily, excellent sport being enjoyed.

1847-59.—Mr. Thomas Hood, Mr. William Mortimer, and Mr. Harry Nicholl were a committee selected to carry on the Hunt, the hounds and horses being lent to the country by Sir E. Antrobus, whose enthusiasm for the Old Surrey never cooled. The triumvirate were thoroughly successful.

1859-71.—Mr. W. Mortimer and Mr. Harry Nicholl were joint Masters, when Sir Edmund generously made a

present of the hounds and horses to the country. Needless to say, that gift was immensely appreciated, and Sir Edmund was regarded as quite a benefactor to the Hunt.

1871-77.—Mr. Mortimer sole Master, winning golden opinions from all his supporters.

1877-1902.—Mr. Edmund Byron, of Coulsdon Court, was Master during the whole of that period. His reign for a quarter of a century was one of great success, though it was marked by considerable changes in the country.

Several famous huntsmen have been connected with these hounds. The first of them as to whom authentic records are obtainable was Peckham Hills, a noted character in his day and a fine horseman. After him came West and then Jack Cole. In the year 1816 the celebrated Tom Hills—who was a nephew of Peckham, and began by riding as second horseman to Mr. Maberly, also assisting as whip—was promoted to the huntsman's place. He held that position—with the exception of three years, from 1840 to 1843, when T. Webb took his place—till 1861, being then succeeded by his son, Sam Hills, now happily alive and enjoying the best of health. Sam began with these hounds as second whip, and then first whip to his father, afterwards hunting them from 1861 to 1892, so that, save for the three years mentioned, the Old Surrey were hunted by Tom and Sam Hills, father and son, for a period of seventy-six years. That probably constitutes a record in this branch of sport; at any rate, we announce the fact with no small degree of pride and

gratification. One's heart is warmed by these ancient sporting memories.

The Hills belonged to a great hunting family. Many members were connected with hounds, and it may be mentioned, as indicating their natural proclivity for this sport, that Jim Hills (brother to Tom) hunted the Heythrop for some years. Morris, a son of old Tom, was first whip to the Queen's ; and Tom Hills, another son, was at one time huntsman to the West Kent. All these younger scions of the family were successful in the various posts they filled. Their heart was in their work, hence it was well done, and it became more of a pleasure than a toil. Thus labour in the cause of sport gains its chief reward, and we are glad to banish sordid considerations.

The author has in his possession a coloured print of Tom and Peckham Hills with hounds, painted by Giles, date 1839, and dedicated to Sir E. Antrobus. It is a little-known print, and the reason why it is not included in the present volume is that the same subjects are treated in our frontispiece.

CHAPTER II

MORE RECENT TIMES

AFTER the retirement of Sam Hills from the Old Surrey in 1892—an event which caused general regret, but age will *not* be denied—he was succeeded by Jim Cockayne, who had been first whip to the Essex. In 1896 Cockayne went as huntsman to the Puckeridge. Mr. Edmund Byron hunted the hounds during the next two years, and showed plenty of excellent sport; but, owing to a bad fall which he sustained in the local Point-to-Point races, he was obliged to give up carrying the horn. Tom Attrill, who had come to Mr. Byron from the Vine as first whip, hunted the pack from 1898 to 1900. C. Wesley, who had at one time hunted the West Kent, came next, giving up when Mr. Byron resigned the Mastership in 1902.

Since that year the present Master, Mr. H. W. Boileau, has hunted the hounds himself. His whippers-in are Charles Gosden and Richard Froude. The hounds meet twice a week—on Tuesday and Saturday, with an occasional bye day, and the average attendance (mounted) is about fifty. Of course, sometimes that number is largely augmented.

The hounds were given to the country, as previously





DRAWING COVERT
WITH A VIEW OF GATTTON PARK
From a painting by D. Wolstenholme

mentioned, by Sir Edmund Antrobus, in 1859, and are still the property of the hunt.

In the old days the territory hunted by the Old Surrey was of considerable extent, quite a four-days-a-week country, reaching on the north to Bromley and Beckenham and nearly to Sydenham ; south to Lingfield ; east to Brasted and Chelsfield ; west to Banstead, Carshalton, and Mitcham. Mr. Byron mentions, for example, that he can remember when he was a boy Tom Hills killing a fox near West Croydon station ; and there still remains a small piece of wood just outside Croydon on the London side, adjoining the line of railway from Croydon to Victoria, which has been pointed out to Mr. Byron as part of a covert which Tom Hills used to draw.

Some years ago all the Old Surrey country lying south of the South Eastern Railway, from Redhill to Edenbridge, was lent to the Burstow to form their Hunt. Until the year 1896 the Old Surrey was a three-days-a-week country ; but in that year, owing to the inroads of the builder and other encroachments, the fact had to be recognized that the country could no longer stand three days a week, especially before Christmas. A consequence was that the dog pack was put down, and the hunting days were reduced to two a week, as at present they remain. Even so, foxes are, in some parts of the district, very scarce.

The honorary secretaries to the Old Surrey Hunt have been as appended, and it is not too much to say that they all rendered yeoman service :—

The Old Surrey Fox Hounds

W. Hine Haycock, 1852 to 1874 ; E. B. Forbes, 1874 to 1878 ; R. S. Fuller, 1878 to 1885 ; H. E. Stenning and Sydney Shorter to 1896 ; Mr. Borill, 1897-98 ; and Mr. John Loveys from 1898 to 1904.

A complimentary dinner was given to Mr. Mortimer (of which more anon) on his retirement at the Bridge House Hotel on 3 May, 1877, with Mr. Leveson-Gower in the chair. Presentations of purses and tea-service were made to Sam Hills, and altogether that was a memorable sporting occasion. Sam Hills' attitude, when he had to return thanks, reminded one of the old huntsman's advice—namely : if you can't speak, holloa.

With respect to the Old Surrey country generally, we may say that it is a hill and vale country, with, alas ! an abundance of flints. There are few fences on the hills. In the vale plenty of grass is found, and it is strongly fenced, principally stake and binders, ditches on one side or the other, and sometimes on both. The country is not now hunted north of Croydon. Wire is far too abundant in certain regions. During recent years, too, a great change has come over the country on account of numerous estates passing into new hands, and getting into the possession of tenants who, unfortunately, think more of shooting than of hunting. The result is that their coverts are usually drawn blank.

The best part of the Old Surrey country is now from Oxted to Edenbridge from north to south, and east from Redhill to the boundary of the country close to Seven-oaks. That consists of a large percentage of grass, fairly

flat, and requires a clever hunter to negotiate safely : in fact, it is called a "small Leicestershire." One authority says, with admirable terseness, "a compact and clever hunter is needed." He must be able to creep a little on occasion, to be bold in a general way, and to possess a capacity for jumping when he is tired. He may come to a very awkward place at the last moment, for the country abounds in such monstrosities or "raspers," and, if he happens to get into a tangle, then his gallant rider may have bad luck. A "provincial" cropper is often more deleterious than one which occurs in "fashionable" circles.

"The Old Surrey," says a chronicler of 1870, "give a lot of fun to Nimrods who know how to enjoy it, and do not necessarily ride as if they were fleeing for their life instead of after fox. The country is all serene for those who love it. Others may come to scoff, and remain to have—a very good time." Those sentiments are unimpeachable.

CHAPTER III

SOME ANCIENT "SURREY" MASTERS

AMONGST the supporters of these hounds during the last hundred years or so many curious and interesting sporting characters may be numbered. The earliest records are, of course, somewhat vague and misty ; but, by means of diligent research, one finds a great deal of information that is worth the trouble of exploration. It serves to show that our sporting forefathers, especially in the Surrey district, were (what are termed) really "good sorts," that their chief enthusiasm seems to have been reserved for hunting, and that they enjoyed themselves exceedingly in pursuit of fox. They were very keen "customers" indeed.

To go back as far as possible, we may note that about 1770 mention is made of these hounds by a Mr. Dudin, who described how he used to visit Bermondsey for the purpose of seeing the huntsmen and whips turn out of a morning, and also how he frequently used to meet the hounds at Peckham Rye. Forest Hill, too, was a favourite meet for them, and Sydenham, for miles round, was surrounded by open commons. Many capital runs were enjoyed in that locality—a fact which will appear not a little strange to residents there at the present time.

Some Ancient "Surrey" Masters 13

One of the earliest Masters was, as already stated, Mr. Snow, a banker in the Strand, and a pretty hard-riding man. He sought relief from the cares of business in the saddle—a good judge too—and was never so happy, it is easily understood, as when galloping across country after his beloved pack. Another well-known Master was Mr. Maberly of Shirley, and in "Baily's Magazine" of March, 1876, we find this note concerning him :—

"He was a great army contractor and general speculator, and, although said to be worth a million of money, failed at last. He took the hounds in 1812, and kept them entirely at his own expense for three seasons; then a subscription was made and given to him. He rode first-class horses, which he bought of Weston, a dealer, and always had three out, the second and third being ridden by his groom and little boy. He went tremendously when hounds ran, and fairly got through his three hunters in the course of the day, with one spur in and the other out. He was a great promoter of sport, an active steward at Epsom, and the Shirley Stakes were called after his place of residence. On giving up the Old Surrey he became Master of the Surrey Staghounds with Mr. Tattersall of Danley Hall. As a Master of Foxhounds he was violent and irritable, and in consequence was warned off by many of the farmers."

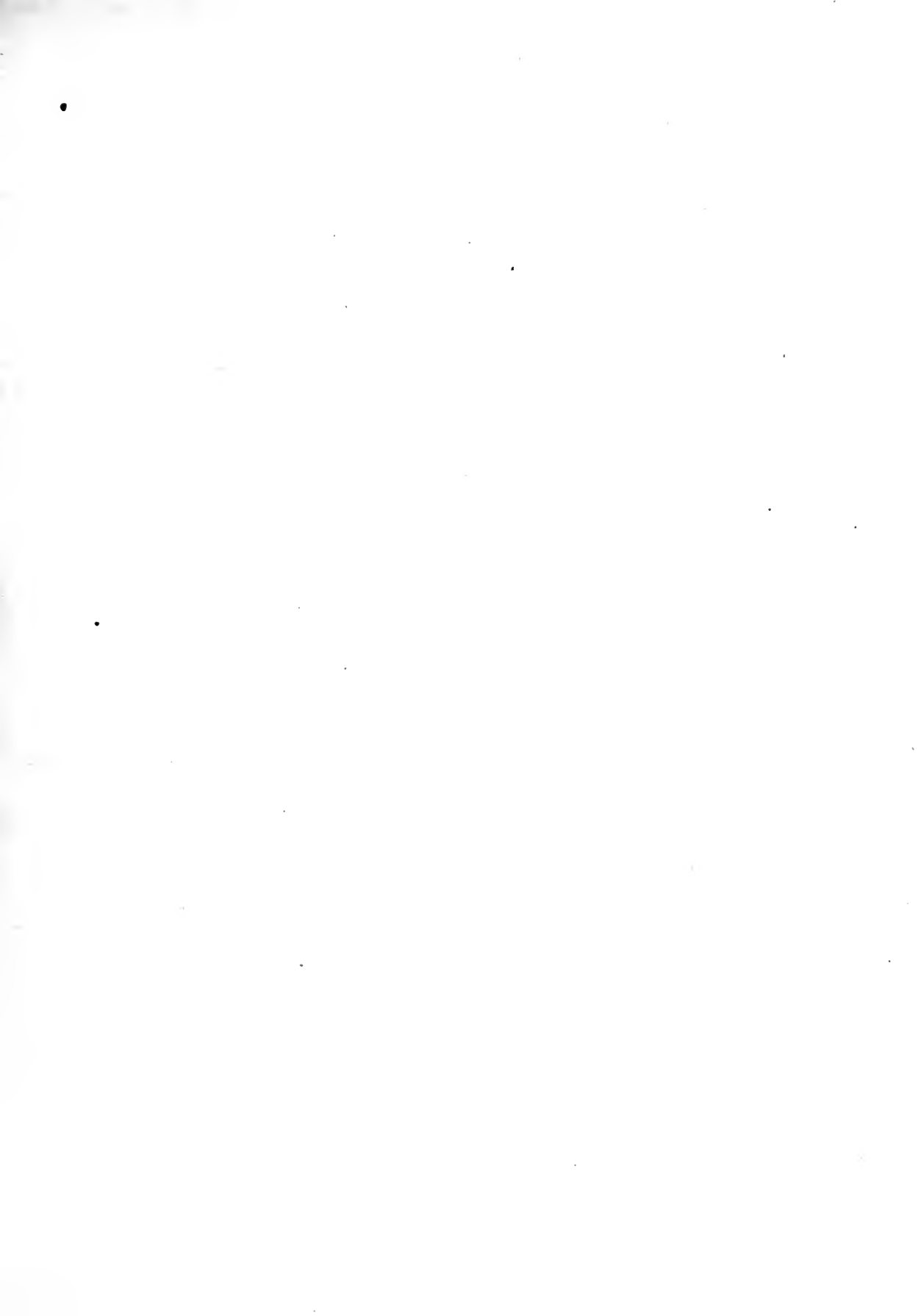
It is clear, however, that, despite his faults of temperament, Mr. Maberly was a good sportsman and passionately devoted to hunting, money being no object to him so far as that branch of sport was concerned.

The Old Surrey Fox Hounds

The fact may also be placed on record that Mr. Maberly hunted, or proposed to hunt, the hounds himself now and then, and the famous Tom Hills—of whom more anon—whipped-in to him. Tom used to say that Mr. Maberly could hunt them as long as they went straight, but that he soon got into a tangle, when his language was not eminently ladylike. Later, Tom Hills began to hunt them (doing so when about eighteen years old) if Mr. Maberly did not happen to be out. Yet the latter rarely missed a day, except on bitter compulsion.

It has been thought that Colonel Jolliffe, M.P. for Petersfield, was once Master of the Old Surrey, but that idea is not correct. Starting from about 1820, he hunted a portion of the country (with his own hounds) which lay between the Surrey Union and the Old Surrey. The country he hunted was started by and ended with him. He loved it. Indeed, the Colonel frequently used to say, "Ah, they may abuse Surrey as much as they like, but if they can go straight in some parts of my country they can go straight anywhere." His pack was bought at Tattersall's, at the beginning of the last century, and when he gave up they were purchased by Sir Thomas Dyke. They are described by a contemporary historian as "a wonderfully fine lot of hounds."

Colonel Jolliffe had, it is also related, a splendid hound voice, and "a great screech with hounds," of which he appears to have been rather proud. He used to drive down to the meet in his gig after being in the House of Commons pretty nearly all night. He was quite one of





MR. DANIEL HAIGH

From a drawing by Samuel Alken. 1822

the old school, and wore a large hat of a peculiar make, always a white choker, blue coat, and leather breeches with long gaiters. He once fought a duel with Mr. Maberly, who wrote an offensive letter to him about digging out a fox. Extremely annoyed, the Colonel called him out, and each fired his pistol ; but, happily, there was no bloodshed.

One of the next Masters of the Old Surrey was Mr. Daniel Haigh, who lived near Streatham. He was a Yorkshireman, and, like many of his compatriots, always retained a strong north-country accent. He was an intimate friend of Mr. Maberly, both hunting together with enthusiasm, and likewise extending their pleasures in other directions not, perhaps, equally invigorating. Mr. Haigh is reported to have been a man of infinite tact and *savoir faire*. A peculiarity of his was that he never led anybody to think that he knew he killed foxes ; but his only definite remark as to that point was, "I'll bet a bottle of wine we shall find now." His wager was not often accepted. He continued to hunt regularly until an advanced age—nearly eighty. His picture was painted, on his favourite hunter, Kitten, by Mr. Cooper, R.A., and was presented to him by members of the hunt. He is described as having been a lean, rather short man ; a lightweight, who always rode with a thin, plain snaffle, and made his men do the same ; at one time he had not a curb-bridle in his stables. "I believe in hands," he used to say, "not in ironmongery." A commentator of his era thus writes of Mr. Haigh :—

"He sat with ease in his saddle, being master of the

situation, though his horses did not always carry their noses where they ought to have been ; still, even with his plain snaffle, he was never troubled by their vagaries. That fact proved him to be a good horseman. In his time big breakfasts were the habit at Godstone, Pratt's Bottom, or the "Swan," at Wickham, where all used to meet on convivial terms ; but Mr. Haigh did not like a man who smoked. He may have thought that it interfered with scent."

After giving a number of other personal details relative to that worthy master—they are omitted with regret, but we are bound to sift the material at our disposal—the commentator already quoted goes on to say, his heart being evidently in the work :—

"On Feb. 21, 1824, under Mr. Haigh's Master-ship, there was a great run with the Old Surrey from Botley Hill. The field at last consisted of only four men, and of those three were on their second horses. The fox was killed at Titsey, making his way homewards, after a tremendous run of four hours. Mr. Mortimer, of Lewis-ham, father of a subsequent Master, rode his best horse, Radical, who carried him bravely through this glorious gallop ; and Mr. Haigh was on his noted chestnut hunter George. Both acquitted themselves well, and there was plenty of most audacious 'lepping.'"

One of the most popular Masters was Sir Edmund Antrobus, of Cheam, who, as pointed out, finally gave the hounds to the country. "A very pleasant man in the field" is the account given of Sir Edmund by one

who knew him, and we are told by the same authority : "neither his tongue nor his horses ran away with him."

Another authority remarks: "he was a good man in the saddle, and a wise man on foot"; and, assuredly, we do not often find such qualities in combination. Sir Edmund went on with the management until the year 1843, when he made an arrangement with Mr. John Castendeick to act as his assistant, the latter gentleman having unfortunately to give up active hunting in consequence of bad health, though he never lost his interest in the sport; and Mr. William Mortimer, subsequently a famous Master of these hounds, undertook the management of the field in the event of Sir Edmund being absent. Later, Sir Edmund resigned his position on account of the great scarcity of foxes in the low country, but there were several large landowners in the district who supported him well, and preserved foxes with considerable enthusiasm. For example, Mr. T. Alcock, M.P. for Surrey, who did not hunt, always had foxes in his coverts at the Warren, Kingswood. He used to say to the Master, "I only want game enough for my own table, and if you don't find a fox in my coverts let me know, and somebody will get a wiggling." How different, alas! is the existing state of affairs in that district, although the country itself has altered little since those days, as regarded from a hunting point of view.

In 1847 the hounds were managed by a committee of three gentlemen, namely, Mr. Tom Hood, an ironfounder of Blackfriars, who was exceedingly fond of hunting, and

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did not mind what it cost him ; Mr. W. Mortimer, who worked very hard to show good sport, and of whom it has been truly said that he did more to promote the success of fox-hunting than any man in Surrey ; and Mr. Harry Nicholl, who was a keen sportsman, and universally popular. These hounds were then going exceptionally strong and well, as the saying is, so that their followers were up in the stirrups.

CHAPTER IV

A FEW "SURREY" CELEBRITIES

TO give anything like a complete list of the many noted sportsmen who have hunted with the Old Surrey at different epochs would require several volumes, and, since we are restricted to one, we are obliged to exercise a judicious care in the work of selection. The material is so rich and abundant that one scarcely knows how to pick out the nuggets. The thought of leaving any behind us is naturally agonizing.

To go no farther back than 1834, because if we are lost in the "mists of antiquity" we are not likely to find so many of those auriferous deposits, we may note that Mr. David Majoribanks, who was raised to the peerage just a week before his lamented death, was a keen follower of these hounds. One of his contemporaries describes him as "a very pushing man," or, in other words, as "a good 'un to follow and a bad 'un to beat."

Here a little anecdote must be interpolated: it shows of what stuff our hunting ancestors were made. On the last day of the season with the Old Surrey—the year would be, as far as we can trace, about 1835—Billy Bean, a well-known character, was out with his drag-hounds in the Streatham country—that reads funnily now, doesn't

it?—and whilst they were running, Mr. David Majoribanks cut in and finished the run with them; he then insisted on everybody present going to his house for the purpose of enjoying his hospitality. The day was hot; so, when his visitors dismounted, they took their coats off, and proclaimed that their thirst was particularly vivid. Champagne, claret, and hock were served in wholesale quantity, and harmony reigned supreme—also for a long time. Amongst that company—alack! where is “dat barty” now?—were Lord Ranelagh, long Tom Codrington, Billy Russell, the member for Pontefract, and Mr. Van Kingston, who, sitting on a sofa and enjoying himself heartily with the others, said that he felt slightly lame from a fall sustained during the day. Examining him at once, his *convives* discovered that the small bone of his leg was broken. A bit of a stoic was he, as well as a convivial soul!

Flourishing at about the period under notice was another quaint character of the hunt, namely, Mr. Joshua Hobson, of Stamford Hill, who achieved wealth beyond the dreams of avarice even in connexion with the brewing business. He weighed over twenty stone, and rode big horses which cost him a lot of money. Accompanied by one of his sons, who weighed nearly as much as himself, Mr. Hobson used to drive in a curious chariot to Parnham’s at Croydon—which was then a great hunting centre for the Old Surrey—where they kept their horses, and, after hunting with spirit all day, they went back in their carriage, in which they both peacefully slept.

Nothing but fresh air and exercise is alleged to have produced that effect. But they loved hounds and "to do themselves well."

Another historian writes as to the idiosyncrasies of some of these Old Surrey celebrities: "Mr. Corcoran, who made millstones and measures in Mark Lane, and lived near Croydon, was a tremendous fellow at timber and very awkward places: what he did not jump he often destroyed. He rode in a cap, straight-cut green coat, and leathers. It was said that he never thought of hunting till he was past fifty, and then began to ride across country like a youthful hero. There was also Charles Morton, of the "Derby Arms," Croydon, where many hunters stood, as likewise at McCarthy's and Bignell's. As Charles Morton was very popular with the local hunting men, they used to have breakfast together at his house; and what a cheery lot they were, to be sure! Conviviality seems to have been one of their interesting virtues. Mr. J. Kaye, solicitor to the Bank of England, was a regular subscriber, very keen, and helped to put a stop order on many a member of the vulpine as well as the human race. Mr. Francis Gosling, the banker, was also a good supporter of the hunt, and he is spoken of as having been a general favourite. He frequently rode to the meet with his daughters, thus adding to the scene an additional attraction fully appreciated by many budding Nimrods.

Amongst other faithful Surrey adherents in those good old days may be briefly noted the following, though they

deserve a more cordial recognition if the demands on our space were less imperative :—

Mr. John Henry Smith, of Purley, who was a great amateur farmer and hard rider ; Mr. Thomas Parker, of Lewisham, very neat and well turned out ; Mr. W. G. Farmer, of Nonsuch Park, Cheam, who rode good cattle ; Charles Turner, of Carshalton, a well-known vet. and a quaint customer, who was a hard man over a natural country when hounds were running ; Mr. John Shaw, of Beddington, who hunted with consistent enthusiasm all his life, and continued to do so till he had reached an advanced age. There were, besides, a large number of City men who joined this gay throng regularly, enjoying the sport more thoroughly by force of its contrast with their ordinary humdrum avocations ; so it was remarked, “ the field was all stocks or stockings.”

At that time there happened to be three very big men hunting with the Surrey, whose united weight must have been quite sixty stone ; and the fattest of the three once said to his friends, whilst drawing their attention to an obese farmer perspiring close to, “ How these yeomen thrive ! They are so deep in the brisket. If they would only work hard, as I do ! ” He had probably never done a stroke of hard work in his life : hence that excess of adiposity. Mr. Horlock, of Limpsfield, a nephew of “ Scrutator,” was a bit of a thruster ; one day he jumped over a huge railway gate on to the line and out again—a feat which was so vastly admired by a nobleman who saw it done that he stated that if he had

a barony he would give it to the hero of that plucky adventure.

But, of course, the matter went no farther : what such heroes get in the shape of solid pudding is often out of all proportion to the empty praise showered on them *ad nauseam*. A "purler" or two are not likely to improve their vital interests.

From a list of other more or less ardent followers of this pack prepared about the year 1860, we cull the following interesting particulars :—Mr. Granville Leveson-Gower, of Titsey Park, who was consistently keen ; Mr. Vincent Nicholl, of Redhill, and frequently Mrs. Nicholl ; Mr. W. Hine-Haycock, of Little Heath, Carshalton, honorary secretary, who looked well after the poultry and damage funds ; Mr. Henry Rose, of Godstone ; Mr. A. H. Slade, of Chislehurst, a capital performer over a country ; Mr. James and John Dudin, of Hayes, who (as mentioned in our opening chapter) once owned the stables in Bermondsey originally occupied by the Old Surrey hounds ; Mr. F. P. Miller, the late Surrey cricketer, a keen supporter, "but," as alleged by a Nimrod of his time, "he knew the country too well and took advantage of that knowledge"—by no means an unfamiliar experience ; Mr. N. Gould, a tremendous welter-weight who, like many big men, was very fond of riding, and was never happier than when he was in the saddle, especially with hounds in view ; Mr. Mowbray Morris, of "The Times," of whom a witty Old Surreyite remarked, "There goes the leading article" ; but, after

the first five minutes of a run, another wag observed, "There goes the following article, and not too close at that."

To make this list of good sportsmen as comprehensive as possible, we reproduce (with sundry emendations) the following from "Baily's Magazine" of April, 1876 :—

"Amongst keen supporters of the Surrey who appear regularly in the field are Mr. John Young, of Kenley, accustomed to take the field management in Mr. Mortimer's absence ; Mr. W. M. Coulthurst, senior partner in Coutts's Bank, and Mr. E. Coulthurst, his nephew ; Mr. William Goldsmith, of Norbury Park, Streatham ; Sir Francis H. Goldsmid, who made his appearance for the hunting after Christmas ; Mr. James Brand, of Bedford Hill, Balham, and his brother Mr. Andrew Brand, two of the best fellows under the sun ; Sir John Lubbock, who during his father's lifetime did not hunt, but now goes well on a grey which he turns from no fence—when two hundred were out with these hounds the day after Christmas, Mr. Mortimer said to Sir John, 'We have to thank you and the Bank Holiday Act for this attendance,' and everybody seemed to be in a thoroughly festive mood ; Mr. W. Waring, of Chelsfield, a true friend and great supporter of hunting in the Surrey country, who learned to like and understand hunting from old Tom Hills, and would get up at midnight to save a cub ; Mr. Edward B. Forbes, of Caterham ; Colonel Lennard, of Wickham Court, Bromley ; Mr. John Akroyd, of Bedford Park, Croydon, with his sons John and Swainson ; Mr.

Hylton C. Barker, of Stone Hall, Oxted ; Mr. John Board, of Westerham ; Mr. William Bush, of the Grove, East Dulwich ; Mr. H. Butler, of Chipstead ; Mr. A. Christy, of Aperfield ; Mr. George Cutt, of Welcomes Farm, Coulsdon ; Mr. C. F. Devas, of Bromley ; Mr. Henry J. Gardner, of Aldermanbury ; Mr. Charles Gassiot, of Clapham ; Hon. Pascoe C. Glyn, of Banstead Place ; Captain Kemmis, of Boodle's Club ; Mr. Arthur Lloyd, of Pale's Hill, Ewell ; Mr. Vincent Nicholl, of Oakwood, Redhill ; Mr. C. W. Price, of Merton Lodge, Putney ; Mr. A. H. Slade, of the Stock Exchange ; Mr. William Taylor, of Court Farm, Wickham ; Mr. Richard Wheen, of Lancaster Gate, Hyde Park ; Mr. Edward Warren, of Manor House, Streatham ; Mr. F. A. White, of Caterham Valley ; Mr. J. Percival, of Marden Park ; Mr. R. J. M'Cabe, of Wimbledon Park ; Mr. John Mortimer, of Redhill, brother of the Master ; Mr. R. B. Berens, of Kevington Park, representing a keen hunting family ; Captain Farmer, of Nonsuch Park, Cheam ; Mr. Robert W. Fuller, of Duppas Hall, Croydon ; Mr. Thomas Garness, of Floor Cottage, Godstone ; Mr. H. A. Soames, of East Hall, St. Mary Cray ; Mr. A. A. Colyer-Bristow, of Beddington Place ; Mr. John Shaw, of Beddington, a first-class sportsman ; Mr. W. F. Tipping, of Brasted Park ; Mr. W. W. Karslake, of Mayfair ; Mr. E. C. Goad, of Hackbridge ; and Lord Hardinge, of Penshurst, immensely keen and fond of a run.

"Many officers in the Royal Artillery have hunted pretty regularly with the Old Surrey. Thirty years ago,

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or thereabouts, the leading men were General Sir Edward Warde ; then came Colonel Sarsfield Greene, familiarly known as ‘Snipey,’ and Colonel Calvert, the Master of the Crawley and Horsham, whom nobody could beat ; and then Captain Majendie, ‘Plucky’ Penn, Schrieber, Brigade-Major Pearce, and Colonel Luke. A little later were Joe Forbes, poor Driver Browne, and Mr. Annesley.”

Our chief object in giving the foregoing list is to show what a variety of good sportsmen—drawn from almost every class of the community, from peer to peasant, from rich to poor—have hunted with the Old Surrey. Needless to add, though we do so with regret, many of the names enumerated are no longer borne by a living personality : the dread reaper has removed them from the scene. Yet, indubitably, it is pleasant to place on record some account of their achievements : how they consistently supported the Old Surrey with all the enthusiasm of their nature, how heartily they enjoyed themselves in pursuit of fox, and how many of them, hunting to the last, reached a very advanced age. As one of those celebrities used to say, when he was still hunting and over eighty, “I expect they will have to shoot me on the Day of Judgment.” But, happily, that was not what happened. Nearing ninety, he consented to pass away in the orthodox manner.

CHAPTER V

TOM HILLS

INSEPARABLY associated with the history of the Old Surrey hounds is the name of that famous huntsman, Tom Hills. As a boy he worked in the quarries at Godstone, but in the year 1816, after riding as second horseman and acting as whip, he was promoted to the position of huntsman to these hounds. He held that position with great success till 1861, and it is worthy of remark that he hunted the Old Surrey pack before he was twenty, being, perhaps, the youngest huntsman on record. He died on 14 February, 1873, aged 77.

A very cheery character and a sportsman to the backbone, Tom Hills was universally liked and esteemed. He was a fine horseman, albeit not a light-weight, and it is not too much to say that he was a born huntsman. He consistently showed good sport for many years in a difficult country; his heart was in the work, which was play to him all the time; and he gave his followers a large number of splendid runs, winding up with a kill in workmanlike style. He lived, indeed, to take a very high rank in the science of hunting, and his fame is, in the sporting sense, imperishable.

A contemporary of his, whom we may accept as an

undoubted authority, thus sums up Tom Hills' qualifications :—

“ He was extremely sagacious, never hurried or blustering, but patient to a degree, though, when it was necessary to go, no obstacle, single or double, was too big or broad for him. He was perfect in his kennel management, a painstaking, persevering huntsman, possessing a great knowledge of that wily animal, the fox ; a famous man to get on the line, and there to keep his hounds without seeming pressure. Good in the Vale, though with sixteen children, his nursery must naturally have been among the ‘ Hills.’ He would account for his fox on the cold-scenting steeps of Surrey, and would climb and gallop down them with a lightness of hand and heart which bore no inappropriate contrast to his walk in life. But he did not shine across country only, for he could kill nineteen out of twenty partridges with his old ten-bore ‘ leaden Dick’ ; he could outwit a highwayman, and, whilst peaceful in all his tendencies, he could make an example of a man heavier and younger than himself when a gross insult had to be resented. He had an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, a truthful memory, was never coarse, had friendships firm and true, and for fifty years worked hard in what, to him, was certainly a pleasurable occupation, until the evening of his days set in ; and the last remaining ten years were spent among the patrons and associates of his early life and their immediate descendants.”

That is a perfectly accurate and unexaggerated tribute to the memory of this great huntsman. Many good

stories are told about him ; we may select a few of the best for the delectation of our readers.

In the year 1814 Tom Hills was sent to Leicestershire by Mr. Maberly, to whom he then acted as second horseman, with a grand horse named Comet, and five others, to make them into good hunters, and also for the purpose of learning the science of hunting on his own account. At first, it is said, some of the "Shire" men laughed at him and his raw stud of horses, but afterwards they changed their tune, and he made quite a reputation there by his brilliant riding. "They smiled in my face at first," he remarked dryly, "but I was soon showing 'em my coat-tails to smile at, and they didn't grin so much at them."

When he became huntsman entirely, he used to wear a bugle, it is related, and blew his hounds away to the tune of "The young May moon is beaming, love," or some other inspiring strain ; but in subsequent years the bugle was discarded in favour of the ordinary straight horn. That, however, Tom did not like, and said, "Confound these new things : I can't make 'em speak at all as I want to, so what's the use of my blowing up the wrong spout ?" He loved to have his little joke.

Writing about the Old Surrey hounds, the "Sporting Magazine" of June, 1859, makes the subjoined references to Tom Hills, and they are certainly worth reproduction:—

"Town grew rather wearisome about the middle of May, and feeling inclined for the breezes of the Surrey Downs, we booked ourselves by the South Eastern for Caterham Junction, and determined to visit Tom Hills.

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The old hall at Garston, which boasts of a wonderful cedar, lies rather more than a mile from the rail. It is surrounded by a little colony of snug cottages, which make up quite a pleasant village, with Tom as the patriarch. The chalk-stone gout had used him rather ill of late, and he had also a bad fall last season, which still makes it difficult for him to raise his left arm to his head. This is not the first of his misfortunes in that way, as he has broken both arms, three ribs (by falling on his horn in the days when they carried them slung), the cup of his elbow in three or four bits, and his plate-bone as well. Gout, however, bothers him most, and makes his action rather short, but still he gets along as of old when he is once on his pigskin throne. It was with reference to his woes in this way that he said, when we observed that his eyes were rather shut in a photograph, 'Next time I'll have it taken when I've got the gout; that will make me open them fast enough.' Still, we found him very cheery, seated in his armchair, which the coat of his once-honoured dark chestnut Paddy (one of the horses portrayed in our frontispiece) has lined. The chairs in the room had all hound-skin cushions, taken from nine of the best of the seven couple of rare bitches which fell 106 feet down a cutting on the Brighton rail some seven years ago. Will Long, Mr. Davis, Mr. Haigh (an old Master of the pack), Squire Waring with his Kent harriers, Lord Derby's staghounds with Jonathan Griffin on his grey, and the Old Surrey Hunt, after Barraud, lent lustre to the walls. Tom, as all the world knows, is in the centre



TOM HILLS

From a painting by Sir Francis Grant

of the latter, on Lounger, while one of his sons is on Paddy, and the badger-pye Factor, by Old Surrey Factor out of Dimple, of his most cherished sort, stands close up to Lounger's foot. There was also an enormous fox in a case. He was not exactly brought to hand in Tom's usual style, as the hounds flashed over him into a covert near Godstone, and a farmer found him lying dead in a furrow next day."

Continuing to treat his subject with infinite gusto, the same authority writes :—

"Tom is now rising sixty-five, and just entering his fortieth season with his Old Surrey pets. Five of his sons are in the profession; and he can say, what no man ever said before—that three of them are huntsmen. Sam began with the West Kent, where he was for two seasons, and now he is about commencing his sixth Old Surrey one with his father. What a galaxy of hunting talent!"

Tom Hills also possessed the advantage of a rare "musical" voice, and was as active as a kitten, whilst his pluck was inexhaustible. When he was riding Paddy over a succession of gates downhill, somebody asked him how he kept the horse up under such a weight. "He daren't fall," was the reply: "knows I should crush him."

His knowledge of the run of a fox was marvellous, and as to that many tales are told; want of space alone compels us to leave them out.

He was a brilliant cricketer, and his bowling once won a game for the Westerham eleven. An irritable

person on the other side said that Tom's success was due to luck, and issued a challenge to play any member of the Westerham Club for five pounds a side. Tom was selected as their champion. He bowled his opponent for three runs ; then went in and made forty, not out. His friends gave him a glass of local sherry—whose quality was, perhaps, of a fiery nature—for every run he scored, and, strange to say, the wine had no effect on him while he was playing, but when the excitement was over he could not walk away from the wicket. “If I had scored a few more runs at the same price,” he remarked, with a chuckle, “I might never have been able to get into my stride again.”

Tom's “bump of locality” was largely developed. On a certain occasion, a gentleman, who was hunting with him, gave him a sovereign whilst he was drawing a covert, and, in pulling off his glove, he dropped the coin. That *contretemps* naturally elicited a short observation from him—we need not mention the exact word, it is so familiar—and, before he could get off his horse to retrieve the treasure, a hound spoke. “Hark to Rampish !” he cried, and, sportsman-like, forgot all about the money. Six weeks afterwards, passing the same spot, he thought that he might just as well have a look for the sovereign, and, sure enough, he found it on the top of an ant-hill. “What a nose for the right scent !” he chortled, “and, if I hunted for coin instead of fox, I should, no doubt, have plenty of money—five minutes before I die.”

After Tom Hills had seen fifty years' service, and had

lived ten more, his portrait was taken, sitting in his arm-chair, which was covered (as previously noted) with the skin of his favourite little horse Paddy—a hunter that he once rode three days in a week, and that carried him splendidly for thirteen seasons. The painting is by Sir Francis Grant, and it may certainly be accounted one of his happiest efforts. Most realistic is the depiction of Glory, a favourite hound, by the Oakley Grappler out of Prudence, on whose head Tom's right hand rests. But he had then been out of office for some time, and his green coat, silver buttons, and general costume are suggestive of a connection with harriers. A wonderful critic of the portrait was a sheep-dog, who frequently paid old Tom a visit : on seeing the picture he wagged his tail joyfully, and asked for food with his usual method of petition. It is related, too, that when Tom had a bad cold, and a screen was put between the door and fireplace, the sheep-dog came, covered with mud, so that Tom told his daughter to turn him out. Hearing the well-known voice, he would not be denied, and, entering, jumped on the sofa, stood before the portrait, and wagged his tail, obviously believing that he saw his old friend in the flesh. After a slight misunderstanding, Tom retired from the hunt for three years, and took a public-house at Bletchingley, though, according to report, it was not a commercial success. To one of his old hunting friends, who called to see him, Tom confessed : “I would rather draw coverts for my old customers than beer for my new.”

During the Maberly reign over the Old Surrey, Tom

was summoned to the Master's private room one evening, and told to ride to Leadenhall Market for the purpose of buying the finest fox he could find there. He was ordered to be careful with him, as there were to be many swells out next day at a lawn meet handy, and sport *must* be made a certainty for them. Accordingly, Tom started from the kennels, then at Shirley, rode post haste to London, discovered the object of his inglorious pursuit, and, having strapped him gingerly, deposited him, legs upwards, in the capacious pocket of a large blouse which he used to move cubs to any part of the country where they were needed.

Cantering back in the night, he was stopped on Streatham Common by a highwayman who demanded, with orthodox truculence, "Your money or your life!" Tom's reply was characteristic. "I've got no money," he said: "I'm only a servant, and as to my life, why, you wouldn't take that surely—it isn't worth powder and shot."

The ruffian persisted, however, but Tom's nerve and pluck did not desert him. He thought of the fox which he carried, and told his assailant that he would find money in his pocket, indicating the one that contained the treasure. A dive was at once made into it by the highwayman; he was severely bitten, and while he was howling in agony Tom cantered blithely away. His remark was afterwards: "I could have downed him with my old hunting whip, but I wanted to see a bit of sport." The ruling passion, indeed!—all his life he wanted to see a bit of sport; and he saw a lot.

Amongst his other qualifications, Tom Hills possessed the gift of boxing with skill and infinite gameness. His fight with Deakins, a gamekeeper of Titsey Park, is historical. They had repeatedly quarrelled, and at last arranged to settle their differences in "the old style," meeting for that purpose at six o'clock one morning at Botley Hill. It was a great battle. The keeper was taller, heavier, and ten years younger than the huntsman. A spectator of this Homeric struggle records that he could only compare the blows inflicted to horses kicking one another. Round after round was fought with immense fierceness; both combatants were strong and scientific; and in half an hour Deakins was carried from the scene of action in a terribly battered condition, whilst his opponent walked away with few marks on him. The two men were ever the best of friends afterwards, and no more tricks were played with Tom or with the foxes—a matter of the utmost importance and the real cause of the "scrap." Deakins, it is related, used to catch the cubs, snip their brushes off, and so prove to demonstration that they belonged to his domain.

We have already referred to the presentation to Tom Hills of his portrait, which adorns this chapter, and there was a brilliant gathering at Titsey Place in honour of that event. Lord Amherst made the presentation in a very cordial speech, from which we cull the following few passages:—

"I have been selected to express the sense of this meeting from the fact of my being one of the oldest subscribers to the Old Surrey Foxhounds. I am not the

oldest present, because at the present moment I have my eye on a gentleman who is a rather older subscriber than myself (alluding to Mr. W. M. Coulthurst). It is certainly now some years since I first heard the rich, melodious voice of old Tom awakening the echoes on the Surrey Hills, and giving notice to the wily animal that he must look sharp, if he wished to preserve his brush, for one of the best huntsmen in England was after him. And, though there have been changes in the country, at all events we have not changed as regards our gratitude to him who was chiefly instrumental in finding us sport."

Tom's response was, if short, certainly felicitous. "This is the proudest day of my life," he said, obviously with perfect truth, "and it is impossible for me to thank you sufficiently for the handsome gift you have bestowed upon me. I can only beg that you will accept my most sincere and grateful thanks for all your kindness, especially for the gift of this portrait, on which my children and my children's children may look, and think of me after I am gone. I entertain, my lord, towards yourself and this goodly company, the best wishes and the kindest feelings; and I hope that you may all live many years to enjoy the grand sport of fox-hunting. I also hope, if it pleases God to give me a few more years to live, that I may come and enjoy plenty of good sport with you."

The applause that followed this gallant little speech was tremendous, such cries being heard as "Bravo, Tom!" "Good old Tom!" and "The Old Surrey for ever!" It was a happy, enthusiastic scene.

Prevented by illness from being present on that occasion, Sir Francis Head sent an interesting letter expressing his admiration of the *bénéficiaire*. We can only spare space for the following anecdote culled from that letter :—

“ Fifty-one years ago I was at a covert-side in Scotland, when there cantered up to it, on a thoroughbred hack, a very handsome, hard-riding lad, dressed for the first time in a red coat. His name was Frank Grant. Ten years afterwards—that is, forty-one years ago—on my first residence in Surrey, I saw before me on Godstone Green a pack of foxhounds surrounding a hale, honest, and good-looking young man whom I had never met before. His name was Tom Hills. Some months ago, when both had turned into old men, when Sir Francis Grant had become the first portrait painter in England, and when Sir Thomas—I mean Tom Hills—had also, as an artist, risen to the tip-top of his profession, they had the mutual pleasure of a few private interviews, and the picture which you so hospitably exhibit this morning is the result.”

Verses galore have been written in honour of Tom Hills ; they are the work of ardent admirers, if not of Heaven-inspired poets. No useful purpose would be served by quoting them freely ; but, in the course of our researches, we found in the scrap-book of an old sportsman some lines which were instinct with a genuine enthusiasm. We venture, therefore, to reproduce the following extracts, which indicate the admiration in which Hills was held by his contemporaries :—

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“How the voice of old Tom in mine ear still resounds,
As he cheers to the pack of the Old Surrey hounds.
Though I oft ride with others, ne’er shall I meet
A huntsman who can with thee, Tom, compete.

At the find what a cheer from old Tom rends the sky,
Such a cheer e’en to equal in vain you may try.
When you hear that cheer you’ll be sure there’s no blunder ;
It seems to a fox like some horrible thunder.

From his kennel he jumps with a terrible start.
Again that old cheer says it’s time to depart.
So, with shake of the pate and a whisk of the brush,
In his mind he determines to make a good push.

But vain are thine efforts, sly reynard, to fly
From the sound of that voice, though with terror you try,
For, permit me to tell you, between you and me,
That, for cunning, old Tom is an equal with thee.

When the hounds are at check, and you think yourself sure,
Again let me say that you’re never secure,
For old Tom, with a cast either forward or back,
If the scent’s at all good, is soon on your track.

You seek for his pity, but seek it in vain ;
No pity do villains like you ever gain.
Foot-weary and tired, too shocking to state,
Poor Charlie, you yield yourself up to your fate.”

It is interesting to note that these verses are signed : “by W. Mortimer, junior,” and are dated 23 December, 1854.

We may also mention appropriately here that we feel rather proud of our frontispiece. It gives an admirable representation of Tom Hills in the midst of his hounds. He is mounted on a favourite hunter, which carried him through many brilliant runs ; with him are Morris and

Peckham Hills, his son and brother. Here Tom's characteristic seat is shown to advantage; and what a stamp of hunter he is riding! One would be sure to feel like "going" on such a "patent safety," even if the first fence were by way of being a "rasper."

Here, too, we give an account of a typical run with the Old Surrey in Tom Hills' time—namely, on 17 March, 1828. The writer of this report signs himself, "A Youngster," but we are informed that he was Major H. Bethune, one of the best of sportsmen. He thus records his impressions:—

"Mr. H. Weston, the banker, mounted on his wonderful grey mare, and I on a good hunter named Woodcock, met the Old Surrey hounds at the Half Moon on the Godstone Road. We sat in the road while the huntsmen drew the high coverts to the right, when 'Tally-ho!' was heard on a hill to our left, which was echoed with 'Hark halloa!' a countryman having viewed a fox slipping out of a chalk pit. Then Tom Hills, always ready, came charging down the hill towards us at forty miles an hour, his horn at his mouth, blowing a stentorian blast, and his hounds at his horse's heels, a fine sketch for an artist. Only five out of fifty or sixty horsemen were well placed. Weston and I rasped at a perpendicular bank with a stake-bound fence at the top. The hounds were now laid on and away we went, our minds made up for grand achievements. Straight away and through Marden Park, thence over the Warlingham Hills. Here the Master, Mr. Haigh, with Peckham the whipper-in, and a few

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skirters, fell in with us, but our number was soon reduced to the former five—Weston, Tom Hills, Captain Francis Head (afterwards Sir Francis Head), young Mortimer (the late Master), and Henry Bethune. We then cut away for Barrow Green, now feeling very much distressed, horses roaring and sobbing like people at an Irish funeral. We found reynard hustled out of all local knowledge; he deserted the open for the enclosures. Down the hill we went, blundering, slipping, stumbling, and sliding till we reached the fallow below. Here my horse choked and sat down like a rabbit. I began to think of the knackers. Weston, with only Tom Hills and two gentlemen near him, going with the greatest possible distress to the Barrow Green coverts. Here, luckily for me, they came to a check for five minutes, which enabled me to trot up to them. They again hit it off finely in a hedge, and bent their course to Oxted, to which place I ‘rode cunning,’ which recovered my horse. The fox lay down in a hedge near the village a few minutes before the hounds arrived, to the amusement of the country people, but slipped off with French leave. We had here a check of five minutes or so, and were reinforced by Mr. Dyer, Mr. Mortimer, senior, Charles Mortimer, and six or seven more, their faces as red as their jackets. A halloa at a distance made us all alive again; we then fenced away to Limpsfield Common, thence to Westerham, and killed in the Rev. Mr. Morton’s garden, to his discomfiture, and the destruction of early peas, flower-beds, etc. We presented Mrs. Morton with the brush, which somewhat

appeased his wrath. After a run of fifty minutes, Woodcock carried me over two five-barred gates and a stile. Tom Hills rode a little thoroughbred chestnut horse called Guildford, with queerish legs. Hills said the horse was afraid to fall, because he knew his weight would crush him."

CHAPTER VI

JORROCKS AND THE OLD SURREY

THE immortal Jorrocks—whose creator was, as we need hardly state, the late Mr. R. S. Surtees—had a warm corner in his heart for the Old Surrey Fox Hounds. He seems to have hunted with them pretty regularly ; he knew and loved their peculiarities, their diversions, and the bright sport they showed. We must make allowance for the jocular spirit in which he deals with this and similar themes. His sense of humour was always exuberant : a genial cynicism marked many of his utterances.

In “Jaunts and Jollities,” published by R. Ackermann in the year 1843, we find two special chapters on these hounds, and each excursus is vastly entertaining. The author is delighted with his text. “What true-bred city sportsman,” he begins by asking, “has not, in his day, put off the most urgent business—perhaps his marriage or even the interment of his rib—that he might brave the morn with that renowned pack, the Surrey subscription fox-hounds? Lives there, we would ask, a thoroughbred, prime, bang-up, slapdash, breakneck, out-and-out *artist* within three miles of the Monument, who has not occasionally gone a good ’un with this celebrated pack? . . . One of the most striking features in the aspect of

this chosen region of fox-hunting is the quiet, easy manner in which the sportsmen take the thing. On they go—now trotting gently over the flints—now softly ambling along the grassy ridge of some stupendous hill—now quietly following each other in long-drawn files, like geese, through some close and deep ravine or interminable wood, which re-echoes to their never-ceasing holloas—every man shouting in proportion to the amount of his subscription. There is no pushing, jostling, rushing, cramming, or riding over one another, no ridiculous fool-hardy feats, but each man cranes and rides, and rides and cranes in a style that would gladden the eyes of a director of an insurance office.”

We are inclined to think, however, that our old friend Jorrocks is a little too severe and caustic in his remarks as quoted. There is no reason to doubt—indeed, evidence remains to prove—that there were many bold Surrey riders in his day, as there have been since, and always will be while hounds run and Englishmen retain their sporting instinct. Besides, we must remember that the nature of the Surrey country demands plenty of nerve from those who attempt to go straight. One meets occasionally with some ghastly places to negotiate. They may not come in our way very often, but when they do come—well, they require a clever hunter and his rider’s heart in the right place, and no “scotching” at the last moment. It is never wise to trifle with an undoubted “rasper.”

Jorrocks also touches on the fact that many City men were accustomed to enjoy their sport thoroughly with the

good Old Surrey. "It is," he writes, "this union of the elegant courtesies and business of life with the energetic sports of the field that constitutes the charm of Surrey hunting, and who can wonder that smoke-dried cits, pent up all the week, should gladly fly from their shops to enjoy a day's sport on a Saturday? The town of Croydon, nine miles from the standard in Cornhill, is the general rendezvous of those gallant sportsmen. The town furnishes an interesting scene on a hunting morning, particularly on a Saturday. At an early hour groups of grinning cits may be seen pouring in from the London side, some on the top of Cloud's coaches, some in taxed carts, but the greater number mounted on good serviceable-looking nags of the invaluable species calculated for sport or business, warranted free from vice and quiet both to ride and in harness. Some few there are who, with that kindness and considerate attention which peculiarly mark this class of sportsmen, have tacked a buggy to their hunter and given a seat to a friend, who, leaning over the back of the gig, his jocund face turned toward his *fidus Achates*, leads his own horse behind, listening to the discourse of 'his ancient,' or regaling him with sweet converse; and thus they onward jog until the sign of the Greyhound, stretching quite across the main street, greets their expectant optics, and seems to forbid their passing the open portal below."

It is easy to imagine the gay sporting scene as thus depicted. Those ancient sportsmen—even if some of them came from the City—were thoroughly keen; they

loved hounds and hunting. Surrey was, for them, the only available paradise, and they enjoyed it accordingly.

The indomitable Jorrocks next gives us a glimpse of Tom Hills, the hero of our previous chapter. Referring to a meet at the "Fox" at Keston, where a numerous assemblage of true sportsmen await the usual hour for throwing off, our author discourses in the following lively and elegant strain, having caught the right note :—

"Hounds approach the covert. 'Yooi in there!' shouts Tom Hills, who has long hunted this crack pack ; and crack, crack, crack ! go the whips of some scores of sportsmen. 'Yelp, yelp, yelp !' howl the hounds ; and in about a quarter of an hour Tom has not above four or five couple at his heels. This number being a trifle, Tom runs his prad at a gap in the fence by the woodside ; the old nag goes well at it, but stops short at the critical moment, and, instead of taking the ditch, bolts and wheels round. Tom, however, who is 'large in the boiling pieces,' as they say in Whitechapel, is prevented by his weight from being shaken out of his saddle ; and, being resolved to take no denial, he lays the crop of his hunting whip about the head of his beast, and runs him at the same spot a second time, with an obligato accompaniment of his spur rowels, backed by a 'Curm along, then !' issued in such a tone as plainly informs his quadruped he is in no joking humour. These incentives succeed in landing Tom and his nag in the wished-for spot, when immediately the wood begins to resound with shouts of "Yoicks, Trueboy ! Yoicks, Trueboy ! Yoicks, push him

up ! Yoicks, wind him ! and the whole pack begins to work like good 'uns."

The above-quoted passage is fairly inspiring ; yet, in one sense, the reference to the horsemanship of Tom Hills is somewhat unfair. So far as we can learn—and we do not write without authority—Tom's hunters were not in the habit of refusing with him, nor was he "prevented by his weight from being shaken out of his saddle." Nor would he be likely to beat "his beast" about the head. He was far too skilful and humane a horseman, he was far too fond of horses, to do anything of the kind. We do well to bear in mind that the waggish creator of Jorrocks would have his joke, no matter at whose expense. Some of his contemporaries, it appears, did not love him with a perfect devotion.

Incidentally, too, he describes a day with the Old Surrey, when the meet was at Croydon, and when he delivered his sparkling pronouncement : "My soul's on fire, and eager for the chase." The account is too long for reproduction here ; besides, it is essentially frolicsome, and not intended to be taken seriously, though it does justice to Tom Hills as "an excellent huntsman, and worthy of a better country." Summing up the situation, Jorrocks tells a friend, whilst riding home after hunting : "Oh, we have had a most gallant thing, a brilliant run indeed—three hours and twenty minutes without a check—over the finest country imaginable."

"But did you kill ?" asked his friend.

"Kill ! To be sure we did," was the response. "When don't the Surrey kill, I should like to know ?"

That splendid termination of a grand gallop had obviously filled the heart of Jorrocks with delight. His reflections during that homeward ride were ecstatical.

“Ah, Tom Hills, Tom Hills,” he exclaimed, remembering how Tom had taken up the fox: “’ow splendid, ’ow truly brilliant. By Jove, you deserve to be Lord Hills at least. Oh, had the fox but a brush that we might present it to this gentleman from the north-east side of the town of Boroughbridge in the county of York, to show the gallant doings of the men of Surrey.”

“Ay,” said Tom, “but Squire ——’s keeper has been before us for it.” One can realize the sardonic humour of Tom as he made that remark. He may not have entertained an immense respect for Mr. Jorrocks. The latter does not seem to have been anxious to inspire that sentiment, having no reverence on his own account.

In “Handley Cross” we also find passing allusions to the Old Surrey. As to them, for instance, it is written of Jorrocks that “His earliest recollections carried him back to the days of Alderman Harley, and though his participation in the sport then consisted in reading the meets in a bootmaker’s window in the borough, he could tell of all the succeeding masters, and criticize the establishments of Snow, Maberly, and the renowned Daniel Haigh.”

We cannot trace any evidence showing that Alderman Harley was ever Master of these hounds. Probably

Jorrocks refers to him in the sense of being a keen supporter. Men who possess a sense of humour and a lively imagination do not always recognize a compulsion to be precise in their statements.



MR. W. MORTIMER

From a painting by F. W. Cole

CHAPTER VII

THE LATE MR. W. MORTIMER

IT is not hyperbole to say that few men have done as much to promote the sport of fox-hunting in Surrey as the late Mr. W. Mortimer, whose long association with the Old Surrey has been briefly indicated in a previous chapter. He assisted Sir Edmund Antrobus in the Mastership as far back as 1843, and, maintaining his connexion with the pack uninterruptedly, he was the sole Master during the years 1871 to 1877. No more popular chief has ever acted in that capacity. His devotion to hunting was part of his life; he was never so happy as when he was in the saddle. And a good judge, too!

No matter, for example, how distant the meet, Mr. Mortimer always rode there; whilst, similarly, he returned home in the same manner, even if the journey extended to many miles. He never seemed to tire, and his enthusiasm for horse and hound was unbounded, indomitable. He was a fine, bold rider over a country: it was a big place that stopped him when hounds were running. Nor was he too masterful in the field, showing a genial courtesy which gained for him a host of admiring friends.

“It is my business,” he remarked, “as well as my

pleasure, to kill foxes in a thoroughly sporting manner, and when I fail to do so I am prepared to shut up shop—before the last ‘customer’ has beaten me.” He was rarely beaten in his prime by the toughest “customer,” and he gave his followers consistently good sport during his long tenure of office.

They did not forget to testify their appreciation in a suitable and practical manner. As previously intimated, a complimentary dinner was given to Mr. Mortimer on his retirement from the Mastership, at the Bridge House Hotel on 3 May, 1877, when Mr. Leveson-Gower occupied the chair, and presentations of purses and tea-service were made to Sam Hills.

The proceedings were of a thoroughly enthusiastic and successful character. Mr. Mortimer’s triumphs as a M.F.H. were the theme of panegyric ; his response was a model of good taste and graceful expression.

A gratifying and well-merited testimonial was also presented to Mr. Mortimer on the occasion of his beginning the thirtieth season of his either partial or sole Mastership ; and the testimonial assumed a peculiarly appropriate form. In the name of the subscribers to its purchase, Mr. Waring presented Mr. Mortimer with Sir Francis Grant’s portrait of Tom Hills. When the fact became known that this picture was to be sold, together with other effects of the famous huntsman, it was felt by many members of the Old Surrey that the right thing to do was to buy it and present it to Mr. Mortimer, as evidence of the goodwill and respect entertained for him

by members of the hunt. This plan was accordingly carried out, and a very pleasant function was celebrated. The following is the inscription on the painting :—

“This portrait of the late Tom Hills, nearly fifty years huntsman to the Old Surrey Fox Hounds, painted by Sir Francis Grant, was presented to William Mortimer, Esq., by a few friends on commencing the thirtieth season of his Mastership, 25 Oct., 1873.”

It is almost needless to mention that Mr. Mortimer greatly valued this picture. He made a bright little speech in thanking his friends for their kindness. “It is difficult for me,” he said, “to express my feelings, since I realize that what has been said about me was not by way of flattery or compliment, because my friends whom I see around the room are those with whom I have been accustomed to associate in the cause of fox-hunting for thirty or forty years. It is a great satisfaction for me to think that what little trouble I have experienced has been appreciated by my friends, and that my mistakes—for every person who takes on himself a public duty is liable to make mistakes—are overlooked. As to the subject of this picture, I need hardly say that I have a high regard for the memory of Tom Hills. I have been brought up as a pupil of his so far as hunting is concerned, and have learned a great deal from him in that respect.”

In concluding his speech Mr. Mortimer used these words : “I hope that as long as I am Master of the Old Surrey Fox Hounds, you will see plenty of good sport in

the field, and that the old pack will do justice to the memory of their old huntsman."

All present were vastly pleased with Mr. Mortimer's happy response ; nothing could have been conceived in a more genial spirit.

At another festive gathering connected with the Hunt, Mr. Mortimer referred with evident satisfaction to the fact that " he had given up almost everything for the sake of hunting, which had been the love of his heart throughout his life. I have had other passions," he added vivaciously, " and the glows subsided ; but, as to hunting, well "—he waved his arm eloquently—" we can never have too much of that good thing."

At the same meeting the subjoined verses were submitted for the delectation of visitors :—

" Some riders there are who, too jealous of place,
Will fling back a gate in their next neighbour's face :
Some never pull up when a friend gets a fall,
They will ride over friend, hounds, horses, and all."

Two additional lines were appended, to wit :—

" Such riders as these the Old Surrey condemn,
And I vow we will ne'er drink a bumper to them."

Hale and hearty to the last, Mr. Mortimer died in his 77th year, universally regretted by all who knew him, sportingly or socially. A current biographer writes of him : " The name of Mortimer is entitled to respect in Surrey annals, for the late Master's father and four of his uncles at the same period largely contributed to its support. Born at Lewisham Hill in 1809, Mr. Mortimer was

entered early, for the little fair-haired boy who, on a certain December day in 1819, rode his pony twenty miles to covert and hunted him all day, has hunted with the Old Surrey Fox Hounds exclusively ever since. A thorough lover of fox-hunting, with sound judgment, activity, and clearness of perception in the management of a hunting establishment, always at the covert-side to the minute, as light-hearted as a boy throughout the day, whether the sport was good or bad, and not easily beaten by his field, even during his later years, he reached a green (and scarlet) old age, with honour. It is not everyone who will take a provincial country on a precarious subscription, and try and manage an awkward field for the sake of pure sport alone, and Mr. Mortimer had an arduous task to perform. But he never flinched, and the Old Surrey has never had a more popular Master."

Whilst hunting was the ruling passion of his life, Mr. Mortimer was fond of shooting, travel, and adventure. He undertook a long sporting expedition in America, accompanied by the existing Tom Gilbert, of Banstead—who has hunted with the Old Surrey for over sixty years—and their efforts were very successful. Some "big game" was accounted for by them in genuine sporting fashion.

"Mr. Mortimer was always wonderfully keen," says the genial Tom, "and if he thought he was missing any good sport he was apt to become quite miserable. No day was too long for him in the saddle; he rode immense distances with his hounds, enjoying himself thoroughly all the time; he seemed to be insensible to fatigue, and when, at last,

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he was obliged to dismount, it was not with a sigh of relief—he regretted the separation.”

What more need one say about an ideal sportsman? In effect, he had plenty of fun for his money in the open air with horse and hound: better than that no man can hope for, even if his supplies of nerve and cash are practically unlimited.



FULL CRY

CROSSING THE BRIGHTON ROAD AT MERSTHAM

From a print by D. Wolstenholme. 1824

CHAPTER VIII

SOME GREAT RUNS WITH THE OLD SURREY

HUNTING history, so far as Surrey is concerned, contains accounts of many brilliant runs which demand a place in this chronicle, so that they may be preserved for the benefit of posterity. They were enjoyed vastly, no doubt, by the Nimrods who were fortunate enough to take part in them. Conceivably, they may be regarded by critics from the "swagger" counties as rather long, slow, hunting runs, as giving a lack of pace and excitement; but we are not prepared to concede that objection. It leads us into misty realms of controversy not likely to promote our sporting purpose. Ancient and modern records show that the Old Surrey has given its followers many splendid runs, which bear favourable comparison with those achieved by any other hounds. The material at our disposal is voluminous as to this point; we proceed to the work of selection with a keen appreciation of its importance. How true it is that "the labour we delight in physics pain," and toil in the cause of sport becomes a pleasure!

To go back as far as possible, in order to do full justice to our subject, we find in the "Sporting Magazine" of 1800 the following notable paragraph:—

"The Surrey fox-hounds have had some sharp runs,

and repeatedly blooded the pack in good style. These frequently boast of large fields, to which the 'Cross,' the 'Lane,' and the 'Acre' contribute a snug and friendly little party. 'Lotions,' 'potions,' and 'patent coffins' may not infrequently be seen at the death."

It is also mentioned by the same reporter that many of the gallops were "extremely brilliant."

The curious allusions above quoted are obviously intended to be of a facetious nature, and are designed to indicate that some of the supporters of the Hunt were well known in connexion with mercantile pursuits. We may let that pass for what it is worth—probably not much. At any rate, in the same magazine of 23 March, 1801, we come across a more valuable account of the Old Surrey, and the subjoined excerpt may be given as an interesting example of the sort of sport enjoyed in the good old times :—

"Surrey Sporting.—On Monday, 23rd inst., Mr. Snow's Surrey Fox-hounds had a very fine chase. They cast off at Ockley Wood, when they quickly found two foxes, one of which took directly up the Merstham Hills to Ninwood, near Coulsdon. The other ran along the Valley, over Tupwood Common, and down to Godstone, where he was killed, close to the kennels of his enemies, after a fine run. They then went in search of part of the pack at Ninwood, where, having joined, the fox was driven back against the wind down into the valley, and, being very hard run, got into a stone quarry below Bletchingley, from which the terriers were not able to draw him. It was

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a very fine day, and there was a most brilliant field of sportsmen. The hounds were hunted in capital style by West."

"A grand day with the Old Surrey"—such is the title of an interesting account in "Bell's Life" of 7 January, 1838, and we cull the following extracts:—

"January 3, 1838—Met at the Oaks, the residence of the late Earl of Derby, and, after drawing ineffectually the furze near Barrow Hedges, trotted to Sutton Bennell. Here they found, and Tom Hills' 'Tally-ho!' soon brought the field to business. Amongst about five-and-twenty out, we noticed Messrs. Antrobus, Coulthurst, H. Scott, Charles Mortimer, Henry Mortimer, Charrington, James, etc. There was a burning scent. Away through the enclosures to Mitcham, and through Gen. Hoare's Park, over the London Road to Sir John Lubbock's Park. The fox travelled as far as the house, and, being headed, turned across the lawn and through the shrubbery to the high road, and on towards Carshalton, and over the road to Sutton. He then crossed the meadows at a Derby pace, and, at the back of Sir Edmund Antrobus's house, he looked as if he were making for Ewell. At Nonsuch Park, however, he headed to the right, and ran over the enclosures to the Nelson, at Cheam. Here he crossed the Epsom Road, and was making direct to Coombe Wood and Kingston. The pace and fencing had now told severely on the field; only ten were left. Tom Hills, assisted by Mr. Charrington and H. Scott, was about a field in advance of the rest. On, however, to Malden, when, finding Coombe Wood beyond his reach, the fox

endeavoured to gain a small plantation near Worcester Park. Here he could hold out no longer, and, after a check of a few minutes, having been laid up in a hedge-row, he was tally-hoed across a turnip field, and run into in the open. This ended one of the best runs ever seen, the country being principally grass, the fencing severe, and pace excellent throughout. One hour and ten minutes without a check. Distance twelve miles. Had Reynard pursued his career to Coombe Wood, there would not have been half a dozen in it at the finish, but altering his route to Worcester Park enabled about seven or eight of the right sort to hear the who-oo. Mr. H. Scott and Mr. Charrington each claimed the brush, but, Tom Hills declining to act as arbitrator, the matter was arranged between them."

With reference to the notable run just described, we may point out that it is now certainly of special interest, not only because the country over which it took place has long been unhunted, but also because, when it was rideable, men who had galloped over it—we may imagine their state of ecstasy—used to affirm that a Nimrod who could negotiate it in the front rank was able to hold his own with any hounds in England. At present, alas! this once beautiful bit of Surrey hunting country is quite impracticable as regarded from that point of view. Most of it is built on, much of it is wired: it has lost its pristine charm. Yet, obviously, in 1838, it was paradisaical.

We may also mention incidentally that Sir Edmund Antrobus was Master when this run took place, and that

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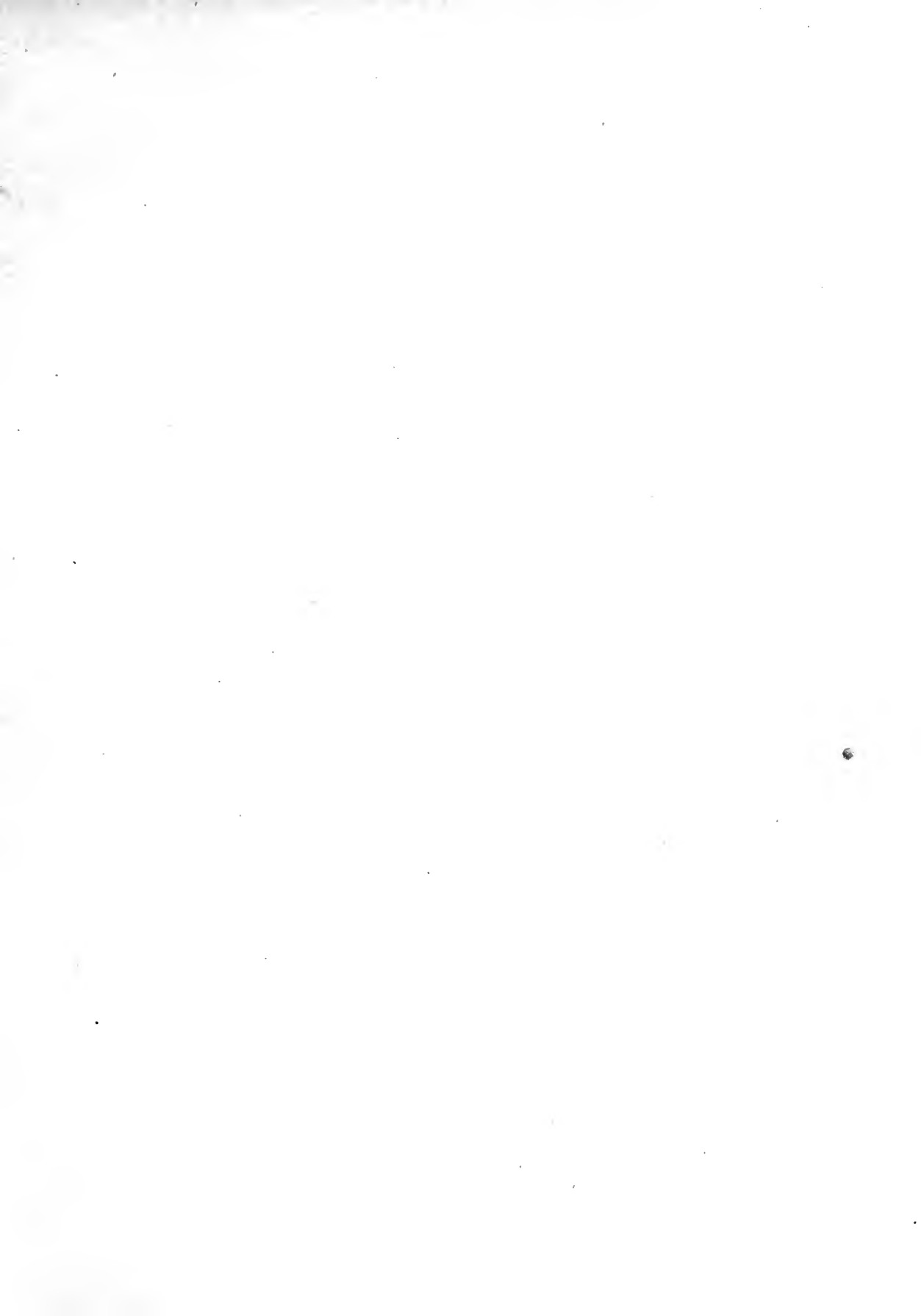
he is said to have considered it one of the most enjoyable in which he had ever participated. A contemporary chronicler writes of him: "His idea of hunting was that it is far better than any other sport, and he proved the strength of his convictions by hunting as often as possible. But he did not regard Sunday as necessarily a sort of bye or blank day."

Oh, those ancient humorists! They never missed a chance to indulge their idiosyncrasy—preferably at somebody else's expense.

We have likewise before us a capital account by "The Recorder," of an extraordinary run with the Old Surrey which took place on 19 February, 1857. It was clearly a very "good thing" indeed, and, boiled down judiciously so as to meet the exigencies of our space, the report thus runs on:—

"The meet was at Nutfield, well known to those subscribers who are true sportsmen, have a good horse, and can ride him. Time being up, that famous veteran 'Tom' called to the dog-pack, and trotted off at his usually fast pace to get clear of inquiring 'gents,' and his hounds safe from fast young gentlemen. After drawing the country to Old Park, the hounds were no sooner in covert than a brace of foxes were found. The hounds took up with one fox, and hunted him at a good pace through Tupwood, Godstone Corner, the Ruffits, and back to Old Park, after which reynard boldly flew across the beautiful valley below, thence running some distance parallel with the South Eastern Railway line, which he

crossed about two miles above the Edenbridge station. He next dashed over the fine grass meadows of Crowhurst, swimming the Eden, where two gallant sportsmen bravely faced the flood. One succeeded in getting through the soft bottom to the opposite shore, whilst the other had to perform the feat of wading to assist his horse, extricating himself with difficulty. Deterred by those examples of derring-do, the field thought discretion the better part of valour, and kept the even tenour of their way beside the river, crossing at the ford, near Serborough Castle, the residence of John Tong, Esq., a thoroughly good sportsman, and a cordial well-wisher of all good things to the Old Surrey. Up to the Lingfield Road the pace had been excellent and steadily maintained; and the Nimrods now rapidly diminished into a select few, the distance and country telling on the jaded steeds: the right man and horse only could be in the right place. Many a keen cross-country sportsman was miles in the rear, and the majority of the field had given it up, and were on their way back to home, sweet home. The line was now through a very stiff and difficult country, intersected with deep hollows, through the large coverts of Cow Den, where the hounds showed their first-rate hunting qualities, picking the scent and driving their fox through, crossing the boundaries of the county into Sussex by Furnace Mill and Pond, which reynard swam, hard pressed by the pack. The distance run over from the find at Old Park was now certainly not short of nineteen miles; the fox evidently sinking, and pace again becoming good. He was now





RUN TO EARTH

VIEW OF POPE'S PIT, NEAR WALTON HEATH

From a print by D. Wolstenholme. 1824

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very hard pressed through Hammerwood Lodge and grounds, pointing for Hartfield, but before the gallant fellow could reach the forest he was pulled down in the Hartfield parish, after as severe and fine a run as ever fell to the lot of the most fortunate to enjoy. The time of finding at Old Park was just a quarter to one, and the time to the finish, without any material check worth mentioning, was half-past four, making the time three hours and three-quarters: the distance run was about twenty-six miles. By those who know the fences, the nature of this country, and the intervening difficulties, the pace will be pronounced exceedingly good. Seven out of a field of fifty were only anywhere near the finish. They were Harry Nicholl, Esq., on his grey horse; John Board, Esq.; Captain Keane, of the Artillery, who had been through the river; Captain Turner, of Rook's Nest, who had to run and lead his horse at the close; Mr. Edward Stenning, Mr. Henry Rose, and Mr. Soloman.

“The seven sportsmen mentioned will long remember this great day. Old Tom, though sixty seasons have passed over his head and whitened his curly locks, thought such a leader as this gallant fox was worthy of his youthful days, and he rode as if they had come back for the occasion; for, despite a heavy fall, he was present, after tiring two horses, to cheer on his fine pack to the crowning effort of the day—the ‘Who-ooop! Who-ooop!’ over the dying fox. That smart whip and fine horseman, Charles Sheppard, was where he always is—with his hounds, let what will come in the way. It is to be

regretted that more, many more, could not see this run through : they would then have exclaimed, ‘We now know what a clipping run with fox-hounds means.’ One such run is worth any trouble to enjoy, and to the setting sun of one’s existence it can never be forgotten. The hounds were about twenty miles from the kennels, and reached home about midnight. As a fine sporting, wild cross-country run, either for fencing, pace, hunting, and finish, it was never surpassed and rarely equalled. Though Surrey is not Leicestershire, I doubt if more average sport is not had with these hounds than in more favoured countries.”

Having thus given a bright and vivid account of one of the grandest Surrey runs of fifty years ago, the same vivacious commentator winds up in the following terms :—

“One must lament that coming years and indisposition have kept the worthy and liberal Master, Mr. Hood, from the field. He generously says, ‘I have had my day, and I now wish to see others enjoy theirs’; and he does not mind paying handsomely towards their enjoyment. It is now his tenth year of mastership to these hounds ; and, assisted as he is in the management by such first-rate sportsmen and workmen as William Mortimer and Harry Nicholl, and with such a kennel of hounds, Old Surrey may smile with content, and say to those ambitious to hunt in the Shires, ‘You may go farther and fare worse.’ To all handy the ‘village’ who wish to enjoy life, I would recommend a good horse—for nothing but a good ‘un will do—and a day, or a few days, with the Old Surrey in

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their low country. These hounds have had exceedingly good sport throughout the season, and some long, severe runs."

Two years later—to be precise, in June, 1859—the "Sporting Magazine" gives additional reports of capital runs with the Old Surrey. We are again obliged to content ourselves with a selection of the most salient passages full of sporting interest, to wit :—

"The last season of the Old Surrey was a good one on the whole, but they never had a worse scent up to Christmas since Tom buckled on a spur. The season began on Oct. 10 and finished April 1st, and after being stopped for four or five days by frost, they killed fifteen and a half brace, and ran ten brace to ground. Three or four runs in the Kent country, of two hours each, were as good things as they ever had ; but in one or two of them Tom was not out, and his son Sam was a very able substitute. Everybody has been pleased with the splendid sport lately shown."

Coming to more recent times, we have had the privilege of being allowed to search through several hunting diaries, whence we have been able to extract a great deal of interesting information. They are brimful of bright recollections touching brilliant gallops with the Old Surrey. Take, as an example, the following :—

"On 18 January, 1877, met at the Cricketers' Inn, Addington, kept for so many years by the well-known family of Joyners. Sam Hills arrived at 10.30 with the lady pack in the pink of perfection. On the arrival of the Master the signal to start was given, and we drew

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the Archbishop's Park where a fox was found at once. He went away over the road into Spring Park, and then through Birch Wood crossing Laim's Farm to Jewel's Wood and Skid Hill, leaving Bedelstead on the left, and so into Titsey Plantation, a rare burst. Thence out to Chalk Pit Wood, leaving Oxted on the left to Robin's Grove, Marden Park, West Hall by Warlingham Common to Sanderstead Wood, Selsdon Park, and Court Wood, back into the Bishop's Park, running him to ground close to where we found him, after a three hours' good hunting run. Pace sharp at times, with plenty of jumping. Not many left in at the finish, and horses done to a turn."

Again: "20 January, 1877.—Met at Banstead, and found in the Park. After ringing some time, went out to Chipstead by Hooley to Netherne and Chaldon Wood, sinking the bottom by Merstham to Gatton Park, and ran to ground at Mark Hedge. A capital run of one hour and five minutes without a check. Vastly enjoyable. 'Took a toss,' but no harm done. Some of the fences were 'raspers,' and there was no time to pick up the pieces. Verily a beautiful gallop."

Eager to gather further information concerning notable runs with the Old Surrey, we journeyed to the Victoria, Banstead, for the purpose of having a chat with Tom Gilbert, who married a sister of Sam Hills, and has hunted with these hounds for over fifty years. Tom has no end of sporting reminiscences bearing on the subject dear to our heart. Pointing to the mask of a fox which he has

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preserved in his snugery, he remarked : “ That customer gave us one of the best runs that I can remember with the Old Surrey, and I have taken part in a large number.” He chuckled with delight naturally, and we pressed—it was the duty of a historian to do so—for additional particulars. He responded nobly as thus :—

“ Perhaps this run which I am about to describe took place more than forty years ago, but I have no record of the exact date. We met at Platt’s Green, Caterham, and found in Tupwood. The fox went away with rare dash to Tilburstow Hill, and next through Lagham Woods ; thence he skirted East Grinstead and Forest Row, being killed about seven miles this side of Lewes. It was quite a twenty miles’ run, and no fewer than three horses were killed before it was ended. The general opinion was that we must have changed foxes ; a vixen was killed. Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Nicholls were then joint Masters, and Tom Hills huntsman. Amongst those in at the death, a select body, were Mr. Mortimer and Tom Hills, both on their second horses, also Sam Hills, whip, and myself on the same horse on which I had started. We had a twenty-seven miles’ ride home to the kennels. The first part of this run was on grass, and there was plenty of stiff jumping all the way.”

A chat with Tom Gilbert as to the doings of the Old Surrey hounds is extremely interesting. He has a marvellous memory for the great runs which were enjoyed years ago, and he is able to describe them as vividly as if they had occurred the day before yesterday. Here is his

account of another gallop, perhaps forty years ago, according to his estimate—under the rule of Mr. Mortimer.

“We met at Knockholt in Kent, found in the woods there, and, after a merry burst, killed at Sir Percival Hart-Dyke’s place at Lullingstone Castle—about a twelve-mile point. We were then obliged to go back about ten miles to draw again, being in the West Kent country. We found another fox near Knockholt, and killed him after a glorious gallop (some of the jumping was tremendous) at Shoreham, also in the West Kent country—a fifteen-mile point, and rode back home in the dark a distance of thirty miles. I reached my house at twelve o’clock at night, having started out at five in the morning, and I did it all on one horse. I gave ten pounds for him, and he had previously been ridden by Sam Hills during several seasons. Mrs. Philbrick, of Croydon, went well throughout that run, and she was a splendid horsewoman over a country—one of the best with the Surrey. Mr. Mortimer was then riding about twelve stone; he never seemed to tire at all, no matter how long he was in the saddle; and it was his habit to ride immense distances. A noted supporter was Mr. John Young, of Kenley House, who hunted till he was nearly eighty years of age. He was a generous and consistent subscriber, a first-class rider to hounds, and he hardly ever missed a day. There was always a fox in his coverts.”

Amongst his other reminiscences of the Old Surrey, with which his life has been intimately associated, Tom Gilbert told us about Mr. Hood, a former Master, who

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used to have a badger drawn every Sunday morning—a pastime of which he was very fond when there was apparently nothing better to do. He also loved to watch his horses cantering or galloping about the paddocks, so that he might criticize their pace and action at his leisure. “The beggars can go,” he would say, “and if they couldn’t they would soon be begging their way to another home.”

We must also give the following citation from cheery Tom Gilbert, who is never tired of talking on this, his favourite theme :—

“I can remember finding a fox at Norwood with the Old Surrey, and we ran him to Croydon by the race-course, thence to Wickham, giving him a rare dusting, and killing after a capital gallop. The country round Norwood was then all open ; a man might ride over it with pleasure. Oh!”—and the genial raconteur chuckled with delight—“here is another good Surrey run which I must tell you about, though it took place about half a century ago. We found in Banstead Park, and ran him through Chip House and Kingswood, and over through Margery, pushing him till he sank the hill and raced on towards Dorking. There he managed to elude us for some time. The huntsman cast all through Betchworth Park with no success, so we gave it up and started for home. An old man was working by the side of the road, and in reply to the question whether he had seen a fox during the last half-hour, he said, ‘There has been no fox anywhere about here.’ Then, curiously, a hound

picked up the scent again by the roadside, and—though the old chap still repeated that no fox had been there—the Master said to him, ‘I would rather believe that hound than you.’ The hound was right. We had another glorious spin, winding up with a kill in the open. Mr. Nicholls, one of the Masters, had a nasty fall during that gallop, but he rode pluckily to the end. ‘I don’t mind tumbling about,’ he said, ‘after good sport like this, and more dirt less hurt, more mud less blood.’ He was smothered in mire, and seemed to revel in his unsavouriness.”

A mine of information concerning these hounds is the veteran Tom Gilbert, and a volume might be written, if not read—though we think it would be perused with interest—embodying his recollections. They are full of bright sporting interest. They take us back to the good old days when there were plenty of straight-necked foxes, and the country was all right to ride, and our robust forbears were keen as mustard on the chase, devoting to it a pure-souled ardour which might be regarded as somewhat of an anachronism in these sordid and decadent times. It is surely a pleasure to listen to the discourse of elderly Nimrods. They are able to tell us so much that—if it be not garnered and placed on record now—is likely to be lost so far as a future generation is concerned. Those ancient heroes are passing away ; we do not breed them at present on the same lines as formerly ; we shall not look upon their like again ; and, therefore, it is well to place a few of their sporting utterances on record for

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the benefit of posterity. A certain educational, if not moral, value is attached to that enterprise : hence our gratification in promoting its success is the more complete.

As Tom Gilbert says, "We ought to forget nothing about good hunting, and what we remember is worth writing in letters of gold."

Such truths, expressed with perfect sincerity, help to make our task easier. Even labours of love in a sporting cause are apt to pall a little sometimes, especially when there is no reciprocity of sentiment. Of that, however, we find plenty, having only to mention the Old Surrey, and friends spring up on every side. It is very encouraging to the modest historian.

The Surrey Hunt had a really helping hand from its first recorded honorary secretary, the late Mr. W. Hine Haycock, who held that position with success from the year 1852 to 1874. Until he was compelled to resign his post for a new home in Devon, Mr. Haycock used to figure well up always in the Surrey runs, and was, therefore, qualified to send to the press (which he regularly did) accounts of the many "good things" he enjoyed with his beloved hounds. He was, indeed, an able descriptive writer on this subject, and the Surrey lost a sprightly historian of their gallops when Mr. Haycock left for Sidmouth. He was a keen wit, both in and out of the saddle. Next to hunting, cricket was his chief recreation. As to his irrepressible humour we may cite the following : Once, missing his umbrella from the hall

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stand, he quickly produced a fly sheet of a letter and pencil from his pocket, and conspicuously posted up the following impromptu :—

“ May rheumatism, ague, cramp,
Or any ills produced by damp
Attack the brute who stole my gamp ! ”

A contemporary of his writes : “ Well did I know Mr. Haycock in the end of the sixties and beginning of the seventies. He used to write under the *nom de plume* of ‘ Scrutator,’ and he wrote more about the Surrey runs, many of which were first-class, than any other man of his time. In those days hunting contributions were supplied gratuitously to papers, and even ‘ Bell’s Life,’ to my knowledge, had no paid hunting special. The first whom I ever recollect there was poor Fred Field Whitehurst, whose son took so much interest in rowing, and died a little while ago. It was the ‘ Field ’ which first stepped out in the direction of specializing the reports about good hunting runs.”

There was, too, as we are informed, always a roguish twinkle in Mr. Hine Haycock’s eye if ever he told the story of a celebrated run in November of 1860. It was an extraordinarily long one from Long Coppice to Lord Stanhope’s Park, and after running by some cucumber frames the fox was actually killed under Lady Mary Stanhope’s petticoats. Harbinger, curiously enough, got him out, when Sam Hills, cutting off his brush, naively observed, “ I never knew a fox killed under such favourable circumstances before.”

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL AND CONVIVIAL ASPECTS

HUNTING men are renowned proverbially for their social, if not convivial, proclivities, and, as a rule, there is a genial *camaraderie* amongst them which makes for joy. Their bond of sympathy is that of pure sport, of love for horse and hound. No wonder, then, they find a pleasure in each other's society, in describing the many glorious gallops after fox which have gladdened their hearts, and in comparing notes with brother-enthusiasts as to some of the chief raptures of the chase. A great deal of genial talk is thus stimulated ; many good stories are told. Soul responds to soul, wit answers wit, and—oh, yes—there *have* been libations. But, at the present time, a quieter policy prevails, and perhaps it is as well.

In the old days, we read, followers of the Old Surrey used to have some glorious times. Life was easier then, and they made the best of it with exuberant energy. They did not necessarily go home at once when they had finished hunting. Occasionally it happened—or the ancient records fail to do them justice—that merry parties were made up, at which the toast of fox-hunting was honoured with extreme ardour, probably until a late hour,

and the revels were of a truly sportive character. We do not now see any of the three-bottle men, and they do not seem to be missed except agreeably. They would surely be an anachronism in this age, when men are obliged to study the question of drink as if it were poison, and are afraid to enjoy themselves heartily lest they may be very ill the next day.

Our forefathers were more robust; their pleasures seem to have been harmonized accordingly. The Old Surrey sportsmen comprised many sparkling *viveurs* who, after hunting, did not always seek the domestic hearth as if its attraction were supreme. They were fond of lingering together in comfortable hostelries. Amusing stories are told about their vagaries. We have not searched for the accuracy of those tales—only for their fun. We may not be able to achieve a smile if we examine all the evidence too critically.

For example, it is related that, years and years ago, a well-known supporter of these hounds remained rather late (after a clinking good day) at a rural *auberge* with congenial friends, and, as the phrase goes, they “did themselves well.” Riding home alone across the fields in the night for a short cut, our hero fell, horse and all, over a heap of turnips, and, though he retained a hold on his steed, he was, alack, unable to get up again. At last he loosed his hunter, and, after a short period of repose, he walked slowly—dare we say unsteadily?—towards his place of abode, finding his spurs greatly in the way. He passed the local police-station, where, seeing a sergeant at

the door (who happened to be Irish), a bright inspiration flashed through his mind.

“Officer,” he said politely, “my hunter has—hic—run away from me, has in fact—hic—basely deserted me. Do you happen to have—hic—taken him in charge?”

“Be jabbers and I have, sor,” responded the other, who had caught the horse, “and I’ve taken the wrong ’un in charge after all. It’s *you* I want.” . . . Those spurs flew down the lane.

Again : An elderly City gentleman had begun to hunt with the Old Surrey with indomitable enthusiasm after having spent the best part of his life in what he called “a d—d mechanical round.” He was not a brilliant rider, but had plenty of pluck, and once essayed to clear some high rails. Flying them with a large margin, his hunter threw him over his head, and as he lay on his back in the next field a friend, who had not seen the incident, asked him whether his horse had made a mistake.

“Not a bit of it,” replied the prostrate sportsman, still undaunted ; “he jumped all right, as cleverly as possible, but”—and the speaker wiped the mud off his face—“*I jumped first.*”

On another occasion the same hero was riding home (after a glorious kill in the open with a pad in his pocket) rather late at night ; he was accompanied by several convivial friends who had enjoyed the run exceedingly. Their spirits were high, and they trotted along smartly, talking about the day’s fine gallop, and the “raspers” they had negotiated without putting a foot wrong.

Suddenly the elderly gentleman's horse stumbled, shot his jockey off into the darkness, continued with the others as though nothing had happened, and they never missed his rider ! The latter reached home in a donkey-cart (with a bandage round his brow) just in time for breakfast.

Virtuously indignant, the wife of his bosom demanded an explanation of his extraordinary conduct. "My dear," he responded meekly, "there is an explanation which is sure to astonish you. The Old Surrey hounds were hunting all night, and whilst I was groping for their last fox in a stagnant drain, he pinned me by the nose and—"

"Go to bed, you miserable sinner," cried the lady ; and he never heard the last of that escapade. Neighbours were always glad to ask him whether he loved hunting by the light of the moon.

A pleasant feature of this hunt has been and is the Point-to-Point races which have been held in connexion with it almost annually for many years. Those races have consistently been very agreeable sporting functions. They used to be held at Mr. Leveson-Gower's place at Titsey, though that was not a permanent fixture, and last year they were celebrated at Edenbridge, being thoroughly successful. The farmers turn up at these gatherings in strong force ; they are entertained at luncheon by members of the Hunt ; a few speeches are made, and the utmost good-fellowship prevails. The races are, as a rule, keenly contested. Many of the members ride their own



MEET AT CHIPSTEAD CHURCH

From a print by D. Wolstenholme. 1824

horses, a fair hunting country being selected, and when one of those gallant cavaliers steers his own champion to victory, the resulting applause is most enthusiastic. It was at one of these *réunions*, by the by, that Mr. Byron, riding his own horse, sustained a bad fall which knocked him out for some time. Happily, however, few accidents of a serious nature have occurred at the Old Surrey Point-to-Points, although the course has, in technical phrase, “wanted doing.” “Half done,” so to speak, and “purlers” were certain.

Amusing anecdotes are told as to sundry amateurs who have essayed to cover themselves with glory—and perhaps with mud—at the races under notice. One of those gentlemen had a habit of “calling a cab” at his fences—that is, he threw his arm up whilst in the act of jumping, an inartistic thing to do—and once he overbalanced himself, falling off behind and giving himself a severe shaking. An Old Surreyite picked him up, saying: “And what did I tell you, my lad? Why, that after you have called a cab, some fine day *the ambulance will come.*”

Curiously, too, we read in “The Annals of Sporting,” date 1822, a short account of the cordial social relations then existing amongst the Surrey fox-hunters. The author concludes as follows:—

“Having thus sent you a few scraps relating to the Surrey Hunt of which I am a member, permit me to mention that we have had this season some very extraordinary runs; and, as we only hunt three days a week, eighteen brace and a half of foxes may, I think, be

considered a pretty fair allowance for the season. Although our pack cannot be called a *crack* one, few hounds possess more speed or music when running breast-high, or afford finer sport to the admirers of fox-hunting. We are a very cheerful body."

Clearly, in the distant days referred to, the Old Surreyites enjoyed plenty of good sport, and did not always go home immediately after hunting. There were high jinks occasionally ere the lights were put out. What a change has now come over the scene! Men ride home sedately, not in roystering mood, and their prudence is thus revealed.

CHAPTER X

MR. EDMUND BYRON

ONE of the best friends whom the Old Surrey Hounds have ever had is Mr. Edmund Byron, of Coulsdon Court, who, beginning as Master in the year 1877, occupied that position till 1902, and during the whole of that period he was successful in showing an abundance of excellent sport. He worked consistently hard for that purpose. A fine horseman, devoted to hunting, and a keen all-round sportsman, with the social prestige of a large landowner, Mr. Byron has fulfilled the duties appertaining to Mastership with eminent ability and distinction.

Mr. Byron began to hunt on his pony with the Old Surrey Hounds in 1853, since which time this Hunt country—then about as wild as it is possible to imagine—has been largely overrun by the enterprising builder. The change is sufficiently conspicuous. In Mr. Byron's early days the woodlands were considerable, but a large extent of them has been grubbed up during his time, and many places where the hounds used to find foxes are now absolutely covered with houses and gardens. From being distinctly a plough country extensive tracts have gone to rough grass and are uncultivated ; the flints, which were

in old days one of the bad points of this country, have almost disappeared.

For example, Mr. Byron informs us that he can remember small patches of land here and there where followers of these hounds used literally to ride over a bed of flints, and actually could not see the soil for them. They were valueless and not worth picking in those days, so were left alone; yet the farmers grew their corn crops on them. At that period, moreover, the shooting interest was not so strong as it is now; the coverts were always open to the hounds, and foxes were more sedulously preserved. Modern changes in that respect leave, alas, a great deal to be desired.

Availing ourselves of Mr. Byron's earliest recollections, we find that the opening meet of the season was always at Worm's Heath—a very picturesque spot—on the first Monday after Croydon Fair, at 10-30 (the time which was then kept throughout the season), the date of such meet being about the 3rd or 4th of October. The country was then hunted three days a week. Mondays were given up to the Kent side, Thursdays to below hill, and Saturdays within easy reach of Croydon. Old Surreyites were then—how pleasant to note!—"immensely enthusiastic."

During Mr. Byron's reign many celebrities hunted with the Old Surrey, and enjoyed themselves no doubt thoroughly; but the statement made that the German Emperor hunted with this pack is erroneous. That report probably originated in consequence of Mr. Byron

going to Berlin in 1890 and 1892 for the opening meet of the Emperor's Hunt on 1 November.

In the seventies and later many of the local landowners and others were ardent and regular supporters of the Old Surrey. Amongst those may be mentioned such notabilities as Mr. Leveson-Gower, of Titsey; Colonel Wigsell, of Sanderstead Court; Sir John Lennard, of Wickham; the Christys, of Cudham; Sir F. H. Goldsmid; Colonel Warde, of Squerryes Court, Westerham; Captain Turner, of Rooks' Nest; Captain Farmer, of Nonsuch Park, Cheam; Mr. C. Masters, of Barrow Green—there was always a fox in his coverts; Mr. Tipping, of Brasted; Sir William Grantham, the eminent judge; Mr. Coult-hurst, a partner in Coutts's Bank, and a great supporter financially of these hounds; Major Board, of Westerham; Mr. J. Young, of Kenley, and later his son Mr. Henry Young, very keen sportsmen; and many others, most of whom are now dead. Some hunted till an advanced age, and it is pleasant to think that they had a good time with the Old Surrey to relieve the burdens of existence.

Since 1859, when Sir E. Antrobus gave the Old Surrey hounds to the country, they have remained the property of the Hunt. Regarding the question of fresh blood, Mr. Byron informs us that he went for it to the Grafton, Warwickshire, Oakley, Bicester, Fitzwilliam, Lord Leconfield's, and several others. Hounds from this pack have been shown with conspicuous success. Mr. Byron's care and intelligent management in that respect have always borne good fruit.

It is scarcely necessary to add that, as a bold and straight rider over a country, Mr. Byron has experienced a few nasty "spills" in his time, the worst of which occurred at one of the local Point-to-Point races, and laid him up for a considerable period. Other "tosses" in the regular way of hunting do not appear to have done him any harm. His retirement from the Mastership in 1902 was the cause of general regret, and its expression was certainly sincere. He was presented with an address, a very handsome cup and gold watch by the members of the Hunt, and a silver tea and coffee service by the farmers.

Mr. Byron has been kind enough—for the benefit of our readers and posterity—to go through his hunting journals and extract thence short accounts of the runs which, in his opinion, are worthy of mention, together with other interesting incidents and particulars bearing on the subject. We reproduce them with pleasure—they supplement those previously given—as follows :—

1882. 23 February.—Met at Crockham Hill, found in Whitebread's Wood, on to Bowsell Wood and Harbour Hook, in West Kent country, where we fell in with the West Kent, and together hunted the fox for another two hours. We killed him ultimately in our own country near Cooper's Corner : we never previously had such an experience. There were two Masters, two huntsmen, some forty couples of hounds, and the two fields of horsemen ! It was capital fun.

1883. 17 December.—The first blank day since Mr.



MR. EDMUND BYRON

Byron succeeded to the Mastership in 1877. . . . Where are those tears ?

1883. 8 February.—A famous run. Found a second fox at 3.15 in Westerham Wood, and he went up the hill to Tatsfield Park Wood on to Green Hill Shaws, Churchwood, Marden Park, and over the Godstone Road to the quarries, thence up the hill to Old Park and down to the Ruffits, where, in a dense fog and darkness, Mr. Byron managed to stop the hounds, or rather most of them, and took them back to the kennels. He was the only horseman left with them. Sam Hills and the first whip were the only other two who reached the Godstone Road. But Hills was riding a horse that he had on trial, and it was not in such good condition as one of the regular Hunt horses. The fact transpired afterwards that two or three couples of hounds had gone on to Bletchingley with the fox, and, finding their way into an open door of a building where a prayer-meeting was going on, they were ignominiously expelled. They returned to the kennels all right. There was not a check in this run, and the ground was very heavy. When Mr. Byron got back to the kennels he found Hills anxiously wondering what had happened to the hounds ; he said that it was the first time in his life he had ever come home without the hounds, and probably it was the last. The fault was not his, however, seeing that his horse was absolutely done up.

1886. 16 January.—Had a good day. Found a fox in Farley Park ; he went through Henley Wood and Slynnes Oaks, on to Church Wood and Stubb's Copse, to

the Godstone quarries, through General's Grove to Palmer's Wood on to Robin's Grove, up the hill by Oxted chalk-pit, Stubb's Copse again, down to the quarries along the edge of Marden Park to Hanging Wood, back again down the hill to Robin's Grove, where we fell in with the staghounds and got in a bit of a mess. At last got on him again, drove him over the railway, up the hill again, and killed him just above the mouth of the tunnel. Four hours—some very fast.

1889. 16 November.—A nice gallop from one of Mr. Byron's coverts at Coulsdon, to Broomwood or Wyllie Farm, on to Old Park, down the hill through the Ruffits on towards Bletchingley, then turned left-handed, and stopped hounds at dusk close to Godstone village.

1890-1.—Stopped twenty-five consecutive hunting days by frost.

1891. 7 December.—A good gallop. Met at Westerham Hill, and found in Sow Wood. The fox ran fast to Crownash Hill, Mollams, and Skid Hill, on to Botley Hill Road; here there was a long check. Got on him again near Lumberdines, and then hounds raced clear away from us through Beddlestead, Tatsfield Park Wood, down the hill, and they pulled him down by themselves near to Rowtye Wood. Only Sam Hills, a whip, Mr. T. Board, and Mr. Byron, saw the end.

1892. 24 February.—Met at Purley Station, and found a fox in the Woodcote Gorse. We simply mention that meet to show how rapidly the country has altered during recent years. The place where that fox was

found is now covered with villas, and cut up with new roads, etc.

1894. 18 January (when Cockayne was huntsman), there was a great run. Found in Brasted Chart, ran to Ide Hill, sank the hill, from there to Winkhurst Wood in the West Kent country, and on to Penshurst, stopping hounds at last at four o'clock near the village of Speldurst. Two hours and ten minutes. Left off twenty miles from home, and did not get back till past ten at night. Within a month, namely, on 15 February, we had another good run from Brasted Chart into the same country nearly to Penshurst Station, but then turned back into our own country, and running back to Brasted Chart killed our fox there after a run of two hours and twenty minutes.

1894-5. During this season hounds were stopped by frost twenty-six days, but not consecutively.

At the end of the season 1895-6 Cockayne left, and as the country would no longer bear three days a week the dog pack was sold, and Mr. Byron hunted the hounds two days a week, beginning rather unluckily by falling on his head into a road and being laid up for about three weeks during the month of November, 1896.

1897. 16 February.—Had a good gallop from Lagham Wood to Godstone Church on to Nag's Hall and Flower Wood, then up the hill to Churchwood, on to Marden Park, and killed near the Godstone quarries. Fifty-five minutes, very fast. On 20 February the Old Surrey had another good run from Holwood Park to Brasted Chart, and an account of that gallop appeared

in the "Field," from which we cull the following extracts:—

"The Old Surrey Hounds met on Saturday last at Down, a charming and picturesque village ever memorable as being for many years the home of the late Mr. Darwin. Sir John Lubbock's plantations were first drawn; for a wonder they failed on this occasion to supply the needful. We then moved across to Holwood, the residence of the Dowager Countess of Derby, where we drew the small but never-failing covert Bushey Viners. We had not long to wait, as hardly had Mr. Byron's hounds dashed into covert when one of the best foxes that ever stood before hounds was seen stealing away in the direction of High Elms. The hounds immediately responded to 'view holloa,' came crashing out of covert *en masse*, and quickly took hold of the line; then began one of the best sporting runs, in my opinion, that have been witnessed in this country for a long time past. There was all day a holding but never a blazing scent, and hounds had to make good use of their noses every yard of the way. The fox evidently knew all the haunts of his brethren on the line he took, though he did not tarry for a moment at any one of them, as he ran through Sow Wood, where the fields were somewhat hampered by wire, unfortunately a too common occurrence in these days, thence to Cudham Thrift, onward over Westerham Hill, and down the valley towards Westerham. Mud-bespattered men with sobbing horses now began to realize that they were in for more than an ordinary run, and some were here constrained to

cry enough, and to look on at the efforts of their comrades to catch the flying pack, who were now considerably ahead of the field. In following Mr. Byron, who was well with his hounds all day, we came on the pack with their heads up, the fox having been headed at this point by some shepherds and turned almost straight up the hill again. This good fox was determined, however, to make his point, as he soon turned again downhill and made for Brasted Station, the pack in close attendance. Hounds now for a moment overran the line and had to be brought back to the Master, who took them through the railway arch and set them going again on the right-hand side of the road. They then made straight over the water meadows, through Brasted Park to the Chart. Before we arrived here, however, wire and locked gates spoiled the finish of a glorious run, as the Master was unable to get to hounds and render them the needful assistance when in difficulties. He tried most persistently to recover the line of this now thoroughly beaten fox, but he was at length compelled to admit that he was beaten, and hounds started, therefore, on their long jog to kennel disappointed, although thoroughly deserving their feast. Fox-hunting has its various aspects and various degrees of enjoyment in different countries, and, though we cannot all hunt over the best countries, I maintain that any man who rides to hunt could not have gone home after this day without having thoroughly enjoyed himself. Although, in the days of the immortal Jorrocks and his huntsman James Pigg, there were not perhaps so many

difficulties in the shape of wire and other unjumpable forms of fencing to contend with, still the followers of the Old Surrey enjoyed as fine a hunting run over their glorious hills as has fallen to the lot of hunting men at any previous period in this country. The bitch pack was turned out in admirable condition. It is very pleasing to note that such an old-established pack as the Old Surrey can still compare favourably in the sport that it unostentatiously shows with some of the more fashionable and more frequently reported packs of hounds. The distance from point to point in this run was between ten and eleven miles, and considerably more as hounds ran. Time, almost exactly two hours."

Turning again to Mr. Byron's notes of his hunting experiences, we glean that 1897-8 was one of the best seasons which he remembers in connexion with the Old Surrey. "I thoroughly enjoyed hunting the hounds," he adds, "and hardly ever went out without having a pleasant day's sport. Foxes were fairly plentiful, and usually there was a good scent."

1897. 18 December.—A good run from Titsey Plantation down to Chalk-pit Wood, back up the hill to Pitcher Wood, across the Botley Hill Road to Whistler's Wood, down the hill again to and very fast through Robin's Grove to the School Plantation on to Tandridge Court, and thence left-handed to the Foyle and Lagham Wood, back to Dodd's Copse, and on to Piper's Wood, from there to Paygate Wood, where hounds were stopped at dark in a thick fog which made it difficult to stick to

the pack. Time, two hours and a quarter, with plenty of pace and jumping.

In according this modest appreciation of Mr. Edmund Byron in connexion with his long Mastership of the Old Surrey hounds, we may mention that “a rum ’un to follow, and a bad ’un to beat” was the inscription on the silver hunting horn given to him by the farmers at the opening meet in 1896.

CHAPTER XI

A CHAT WITH SAM HILLS

IT is pleasant to find an old huntsman spending his retirement in ease and comfort, in the enjoyment of good health and a serenity of mind perfectly unruffled, in the midst of friends who regard him with sincere respect and affection. Few of us can expect sweeter compensations for our old age. And, happily, those are the conditions which now surround the life of Sam Hills, who acted as huntsman to the Old Surrey hounds for thirty-two seasons without a break. He resigned that position in 1892, when he was presented with a testimonial of six hundred pounds by the Master and members of the Hunt. Never was a testimonial better deserved.

In the pleasant village of Lingfield, chiefly notable at present for its races, Sam Hills now resides, a popular figure. Everybody likes him; and, of course, he is looked up to as quite a sporting oracle by his neighbours. We recently had a long chat with the veteran about the Old Surrey hounds: it was a thoroughly interesting, agreeable, and instructive experience. Sam possesses a wonderful memory concerning the subject he loves so well; he has plenty of anecdotes and reminiscences as to the glorious sport enjoyed with these hounds in bygone



SAM HILLS

days ; he has a keen sense of humour, with a merry twinkle of the eyes delightful to watch ; and he is no mean *raconteur*. He is obliged to depend on his powers of recollection. At one time he was accustomed to keep a record of the doings of the hounds ; but, thanks to removals and one cause or other, those precious archives have been lost. Yet, orally, he is quite equal to the occasion. One has only to tap him genially, and the result is a spontaneous flow of sporting eloquence. He seems to remember everything so clearly, vividly, without an effort. Time spent with him is a sort of intellectual sporting feast.

He told the story of his life with an air of simple modesty and restraint. "I was born," he said, "at the kennels, Chelsham, so that if I had not taken kindly to hunting it was not the fault of my parents. They certainly did what they could for me in that direction, and I was only too glad to second their humble efforts."

He chuckled as he said that, confessing that, thanks to his good start—and assuredly it is nothing against a huntsman to be born at the kennels—he had enjoyed a lot of fine sport in his time. "There may be more money in business," he remarked, "but there is no fun in it, and it does not leave us much to gloat over in our old age." There is the cash, of course, to gloat over, but that is a poor substitute for spiritual or sporting beatitude.

At the age of fifteen Sam Hills began his practical acquaintance with hunting as second horseman for his father, Tom Hills, who then hunted the Old Surrey, and

was naturally proud of the accomplishments of his youngster. Tom was then—it is almost needless to add—one of the most popular characters connected with the grand old sport in Surrey. When he was seventeen, Sam went as first whip to Mr. Waldo, of Stonewall Park, who had then a pack of fox-hounds of his own, and appears to have been a very gay, enterprising sportsman. Sam remained there for three seasons, and the pack does not seem to have had a long term of existence. A short life and a merry one was, perhaps, the idea aimed at.

“We hunted anybody’s country,” Sam observed, with a roguish twinkle, “and had some first-rate runs. The kennels were at Hever Castle. I can remember killing a fox close to the water jump on the present Lingfield race-course, and thereby hangs a tale. The farmer was a cantankerous old party, and objected to us strongly. ‘Don’t come hunting here again,’ he growled, when we had killed the fox; but, after a time, our Master, a very persuasive gentleman, got round the old chap, and we actually went to his house after the final ceremonies—it was a bitterly cold day, and we were drenched to the skin—and cleared him out of liquid refreshment. The next day Mr. Waldo sent him from Tunbridge a supply of wines, spirits, etc., sufficient to last him for years, and the heart of the cantankerous one was won. ‘Come hunting when you like,’ he said, after a pleasant gurgle or two, ‘and I don’t mind if you kill several foxes in my best bedroom.’ That was certainly not a bad way of settling a hunting difficulty.”

After a short and exhilarating period with Mr. Waldo, when some of the runs were exceptionally brilliant, Sam Hills went back to his father and the Old Surrey as second whip, his brother Morris having gone to the Queen's stag-hounds. Sam acted as second whip for three seasons, and then as first whip for five seasons. After that he was appointed huntsman—a position which he filled with success and distinction, as stated, for no fewer than thirty-two years continuously. His record is not likely to be beaten ; and it is one of which he may well be proud.

During his long association with these hounds, Sam served under four Masters, namely, Messrs. Castendeick, Hood, Mortimer, and Byron, to all of whom he accords a hearty tribute of admiration for their sterling sporting qualities. Towards the last Mr. Castendeick did not ride, owing to physical disability, but the others were exceedingly keen. "Mr. Mortimer was a fine horseman," said Sam, "with good hands, sound judgment, and discretion ; whilst Mr. Byron rode with rare dash and determination. Nothing stopped him when hounds were running."

Questioned as to his own riding feats—and some of them must have been heroic—Sam modestly disclaimed the credit of any splendid achievements in that line. But we could not let him off at that. We have seen the way in which he used to get over a difficult country in pursuit of fox, and, accordingly, we pressed for more illuminating particulars.

"What about falls?" we asked, and waited with a thrill of anticipation. "Grief" is always an interesting subject.

“Oh, yes,” replied the veteran huntsman, “I have had plenty of falls, they were part of the day’s work, but I was generally pretty lucky in avoiding serious hurt. One of my worst tumbles was at Westerham, where my horse put his feet in a rabbit-hole—just as I was warning somebody else to look out—and he gave me a fearful crushing. Besides,” added Sam, with his dry humour, “he knocked all my teeth out except three, and I have no idea where the others went to. I was unconscious until it was too late to make a search for them in the long grass. And the new ones have done very well.”

Warming to his work, or, rather, settling down into his stride, Sam also mentioned that his head has been knocked about a great deal, and that on one desperate occasion he had his throat severely cut by a horse jumping on it when he was down. His windpipe was rather conspicuously exhibited. That was a narrow shave for the plucky huntsman.

“Even now,” he confessed, “I feel the effects of those promiscuous crushings, especially with a change of weather. But my general health is good, except for a touch of the gout occasionally, and that”—his eyes twinkled again—“I don’t attribute to the hunting.”

Our conversation next turned on the doings of the Old Surrey hounds in their palmy days, with a view to make our history more complete in that particular; and, happily, it was on this theme, as might have been expected, that Sam Hills became exceptionally enthusiastic. Hunting is not what it was, nothing like so good as it used to be in

the best Old Surrey times ; runs are far less brilliant—such were some of the points on which he expatiated with animation. It was a pleasure to hear the words of wisdom come trippingly off his tongue.

“We used to have from a hundred to a hundred and fifty mounted followers,” he declared, “and they included nearly all the great landowners of the district, all keen supporters of the Hunt. Nowadays there are few of that class who are seen out with our hounds. The old generation has died out, and the young lot do not seem to take kindly to hunting—at least, not in Surrey. The result is that the existing prospects do not seem to be particularly rosy.”

Here the *raconteur* sighed, and lost some of his sparkle of visage. The idea that hunting is not what it was, that the Old Surrey runs are less splendid than they were in the brave days of old, caused him to assume a rather lugubrious aspect. But not for long. Talk about hunting cheered him up : it is certainly a brisk tonic for any well-regulated mind.

“Practically,” he went on, as if intent on getting his second wind, “we used to have the country from Penge to Ashdown Forest, and much of that near to London is now devoted, alas ! not to hunting, but to bricks and mortar. Streets and villas,” he sighed, “not foxes and hounds.”

The change is sufficiently drastic, not a little regrettable ; and, having regard to the general local conditions, we may anticipate an even more extensive development in

that respect. Town is pushing itself into the country, so to speak. London is growing in all directions, so that to enjoy the sport of good hunting anywhere near it is virtually impossible. Surrey has been one of the worst sufferers from that system of persistent encroachment.

Continuing his reminiscences with no abatement of interest, Sam Hills ran on, to wit : " Nor are the Surrey foxes what they used to be in my time. We had then plenty of good wild hill foxes, born and bred in the district, taught all about it by their wily parents. They were not"—he winked slightly—" put down."

It was not necessary, however, to labour that point. Suggestions of Leadenhall Market are not pleasant in this connexion to a true sportsman. What is " put down," *faute de mieux*, we prefer to leave to the vivid imagination of our readers who may have had some experience of the imported product. It is not likely to be very satisfactory.

" Our old hill foxes," Sam went on, " wanted a lot of catching. They often ran for three hours and a half and four hours. We used up a lot of horses in the course of those tremendous runs. There was any amount of good stiff jumping in the Oxted, Edenbridge, and Westerham districts particularly. A clever hunter was required, one accustomed to the country ; otherwise, if he tried to fly things as in the shires, he was sure to come to grief. We often had men out with us from other packs, and after they had tried to reach the end of one of our long gallops over a rough part of our territory, they realized what



THE DEATH
IN A WHEELWRIGHT'S YARD AT MERSTHAM
From a painting by D. Wolstenholme

Surrey hunting meant in those days. The big banks and ditches wanted a really good horse."

Here the old huntsman glanced affectionately at his arm-chair covered with the skin of one of his favourite hunters. "That," he said, with shining eyes, "was the best mare I ever threw my leg across. Her name was Lady Teazle, and I rode her for twelve seasons. She could jump anything in reason, and what she couldn't jump she could creep or climb. She had a heart as big as a mountain, and no day was too long for her if"—the speaker chuckled again—"it did not extend far into the night."

That led us naturally to discourse on some of the great runs with the Old Surrey which still live in the memory of Sam Hills, and in which he actually participated. "I may have had to cut the corners off a bit sometimes," he added shrewdly, "knowing the country, when such policy was the only means of getting to the end, but there were always plenty of hard riders behind me to see the way I went."

Unfortunately, as already stated, Sam Hills' record of exceptionally brilliant Surrey runs has not been preserved, though, from memory, he gave us an account of the following, which come appropriately into this chapter:—

Met at Banstead Park, and found there. The fox went away over Banstead Downs to the Carshalton furzes, and back through the park to Gatton, across the Reigate Road, through Margery and along Pebble Hill to Box Hill, and we killed him in the river near the Burford

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Bridge. The time was two hours and a quarter, and there was a nice lot of jumping. I gave the brush to a lady, not because she was beautiful—which she was—but because she rode so beautifully. Some of the gentlemen's horses were so done up that it was wondered how they—or the gentlemen—would ever get home that night."

A noteworthy incident connected with a remarkably good fox was next described by Sam with gusto. "That fox," he affirmed, "used to lay about the Sanderstead and Addington district. He had given us two splendid runs, and had managed to save his brush each time. He had run always to Chislehurst, where we had lost him. On the third occasion, however, after finding him in Bishop's Park, Addington, we ran him through Spring Park to Hayes and Bromley Common, thence over Chislehurst Common—he made the same point as before—to Lord Sidney's place, when we discovered how he had succeeded in evading us previously. He ran into the root of an old tree and upwards on to one of the boughs. We got him down this time and killed him. He was a rare good fox, and, as will be inferred, extremely cunning. The distance of that gallop was about fourteen miles as hounds ran."

With reference to the many poetical effusions which Sam Hills' deeds in the hunting field have inspired, he spoke with his usual modesty, but some verses which appeared in "Bell's Life" of 9 January, 1864, seem to meet with his approval. We think it desirable to reproduce them as follows :—

OUR OLD SURREY SEASON

Dear Bell, can you spare me a moment or two,
While in justice to our pack in years not a few,
I chant of our hounds and the post which Sam fills,
Now that snow's scattered lightly on yon distant Hills.

Of the sport that he's shown us below and above,
Gloried in by all those who the old hunt approve,
Take "Worm's Heath" and "Westerham," the day from
Nutfield,
"Godstone," "Woldingham" next, nor need "Itchingwood" yield.

"Botley Hill" to the Rook's Nest—I pause here awhile,
For we miss that warm greeting and known friendly smile—
"Bletchingley," "Tandridge Gate," and last week from the
Shaw,

Under Cudham to Holwood's great limb of the law.

Tho' few days I've been with them, yet truly can boast
Of a run in all winds when of scent scarce a ghost.
We're not jealous, though chaff flowed in full as we stood
Face to face with the "Staggers" at Lombardine's Wood.

Surely happy's the man who's a trifle to spare,
For with what sort of sport can fox hunting compare?
First picture the "ladies," our meet Titsey Church,
And condolence with those who were left in the lurch.

Here the "Squire" gave the word after mounting his bay,
But before I can write it there's "Hark!" "Hoick away!"
Have a care now you fast ones, short indeed is his start,
He's no stranger, d'ye see how he points for the Chart?

"Yoicks to him, Melody!"—fair Rosamond's right—
If the open he'll face and he is but in plight,
Your thoroughbred's bottom will surely be tried—
Our pack here divides—where are you who can ride?

The Old Surrey Fox Hounds

Come on : here's our huntsman's ten couple or less.
 For'ard over the hill ; 'tis the way I can guess.
 We're for Sevenoaks or Sussex, for this half lady pack
 Sure have courage to take him to Tonbridge and back.

The alphabet twenty-six letters can boast—
 I can count up but eight of the Old Surrey host.
 The "Squire" and the "Colonel"—how the old grey does go!
 Just try to keep with him and you'll pretty soon know.

Mr. Strongi'tharm merits a token of praise—
 Honour ne'er can desert the green collar from Hayes.
 By "Fuller's" report—there's a son of Sir John,
 Staunch preserver, and friend, too, of more packs than one.

On to Everland's Vale, not intending to yield,
 Leaving Ide Hill and "Bayley's," right down to the Weald,
 This good fox gave us proof by the pace and his sailing
 That the "Yankee" and Sam have the "family failing."

Coverts here of all sizes, "Rampish" taking the lead,
 Whom no hound can excel in nose, bottom, or speed ;
 While "Confederate" next must undoubtedly face
 The stiffest of fences to keep in his place.

He's well over—the grey, too—by Jove, what a pair !
 For they're Castor and Pollux when seen in the air ;
 While your servant on "Sportsman," half in hope, more in fear,
 Gets safe o'er a double he ne'er thought to clear.

Tally ho!s now the word, spurs in and let's follow—
 In the world what is like that cheery View Holloa ?
 Just three hours by my watch, we're but few, all alone—
 Half an hour if he'll last and we'll reach Chiddingstone.

O'er the "Causeway" to "Boons," leaving Penshurst behind,
 Four hours we completed from finish to find.
 At the "Eleers" we changed foxes, and thus to his rest
 Was left this good scion of Old Surrey's best.

That day was a Saturday, of December nineteen,
Just a fortnight ago, though 'twere better, I ween,
That the Thursday next coming this fox should be past
To the home of his fathers—his praises will last.

One verse of my lay shall "old Tom's" life record,
That huntsman who ne'er failed good sport to afford;
May he stand as a pattern with honour to boast—
His long life—and Sam too—I will give as a toast.

With hurrah for fox hunting, the joy of the chase :
May our doings in Surrey deserve just one place.
Hurrah, let each drink, as a tumbler he fills—
May the Old Surrey hunt last as long as her "*Hills* !"

It may be mentioned in respect to the foregoing effusion—whose sentiments are unimpeachable even if the poetry is not quite up to classical form—that "Confederate" thus honoured in immortal verse was the horse ridden by Sam Hills, and, according to his pilot, he was a "smasher" over a country. What he could not jump or get over in some way was not fit for human contemplation.

On the subject of the good hunters he has ridden—and he certainly needed a tip-topper to keep with his hounds over this difficult country throughout the long runs enjoyed during his *régime*—Sam Hills is apt to become extremely enthusiastic. Needless to say, he was a fine horseman in his day, riding at about twelve stone, and he appreciates horses accordingly. One of the best he had, he told us, was a black horse, thoroughbred, a very good-looking one, which had been sent to the hunt stables by Lord Rothschild to see what could be made of

him there, since he had acquired vicious propensities. His jockeys could do nothing with him.

"I liked a rough 'un in those days," Sam remarked, "so I took on the big black with pleasure. He was a beauty. He used to rear habitually when he was mounted, so I slipped off him quickly one fine morning when he was up, and pulled him over. He did not fancy that at all, and soon became quiet. He turned out to be one of the grandest hunters I ever rode; he carried me well for eight or nine seasons. No day was too long for him, no fence too big. Towards the last, however, after I had ridden him through a very severe run with a kill on the hill, I got off him to take the fox, when the Master came up and said that I had done for my horse. "He was all right when I left him," was my reply.

"Well, he's *not* all right now," rejoined the Master, "because he has rolled down the hill!"

That story evidently lives pretty vividly in Sam's memory; he loves to talk about that game black hunter. We don't get one like that every day. If the supply were only more abundant the money might be found.

"In addition to his other good qualities," resumed the huntsman, "he was the best I ever rode for galloping at top speed down our steep Surrey hills without the slightest 'scotching' or putting a foot wrong. He kept his hind legs still, and galloped down, so to speak, with his fore legs, as horses must do if they have to descend these slopes at any pace. One has to keep their head straight, sit still, and trust to providence."

Many men, by the by, who have come from a flat country to hunt in Surrey have found these hills a difficulty at first. Tremors assailed them at the prospect of dashing down a sort of precipice as if there were nuggets being given away at the bottom. But one soon gets used to even that method of progression. Horses are not slow to acquire the necessary facility. Their riders may have to harden their hearts during the initial stages of the descent, for courage may be a little tried in this relation.

Pursuing his reminiscent vein, Sam Hills mentioned that years ago the natural supply of strong wild foxes was adequate in Surrey. Now, as he says, things are rather different, certainly not brighter, in that respect.

“During the last two or three seasons,” he averred, “when I was with the hounds we killed sixteen or seventeen brace of foxes. Thirty or forty years ago we used to kill about twenty-five and thirty brace. Curiously, in my first season I killed the most, namely, thirty-two brace, which was a record.”

In those good old times, too, the Old Surrey hounds were sometimes hunting four days a week. They indulged in the luxury of a bye day pretty frequently. There was plenty of country, a sufficiency of foxes, and any number of keen sportsmen—emphatically the “right sort.” At the present period many parts of the country, formerly excellent to ride over, are not available for that purpose; the causes of such change having been already specified. Those causes continue to make their influence steadily felt; they may become more potent; and the results are

not likely to be favourable to hunting, so far, at any rate, as Surrey is concerned.

Naturally Sam Hills is prone to speak warmly anent these points. He has devoted his life to hunting, and wishes the ancient traditions to be maintained. "The Old Surrey country," he remarked incidentally, "used to be rough and cramped, with plenty of big banks and ditches, but now the enclosures are not so thickly fenced, and there is not so much jumping to be done. Still, as I may repeat, it wants a clever horse, and one thoroughly 'schooled' to the district. They soon come to it," he added with appreciation, "after they have been down two or three times."

Then, examining a few of his sporting relics, we noticed—needless to say, with admiration—a handsome fox's brush suspended over his mantelpiece in the dining-room. Our heart was stirred. "As to that now?" we murmured, and sat tight to await developments.

The old gentleman sighed. Exciting memories had evidently been stimulated: he lived in the grand sporting past again.

"Oh, as to that," he replied, with a light in his eyes, "that is my last brush."

His last brush! There was a world of pathos and suggestion in the words; probably only a huntsman or an ardent Nimrod can realize their full meaning and significance. His last brush! Assuredly it was a fitting crown to a bright sporting career.

And then Sam Hills briefly described for our edifica-

tion the run which led up to the capture of the treasure now preserved with jealous care. How pleasant to derive these inspirations from the fountain head !

“ We met at Tatsfield,” he said, “ and found a fox in Tatsfield Park—obviously a stout, straight-necked customer. He raced away to Deadman’s Bank and over by Skid Hill, Chelsham, and back through Titsey Plantation, thence, after a splendid gallop, to Tatsfield, where we found him, and he then sank the hill to Westerham, where we killed him in the open. That was a capital run of about two hours with plenty of pace and jumping. I kept the brush because it was my last one, and also because——”

He did not finish the sentence, but we could read, so to speak, between the lines. It is not pleasant to have to give up anything in this world, least of all hunting—though age is sure to beat us in the end, even if we manage to keep going till that climax is reached—and lugubrious recollections are best suppressed to the utmost practicable extent. They do not contribute to the hilarity of mortals. We did not care to ask any more questions about that last brush. It is one of the most interesting hunting memorials we have seen.

Though Sam Hills is a keen all-round sportsman, he has never ridden in a steeplechase, not having a great fondness for that exhilarating exercise. He has been especially devoted to shooting and cricket ; he has seen a great deal of fun, and has thoroughly enjoyed himself in both departments. For many years he shot regularly at

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Mr. Gower's place at Titsey, "where," he observed dryly, "we were not expected to miss."

In respect to cricket, he stated, he once stopped at the wickets so long that the opposition suddenly vanished into space in search of beer. It was a village-green match, with rural nymphs to intensify the enjoyment of those revels, notably towards the evening. One may imagine the picturesque scene with the appreciation of a connoisseur who has not yet forgotten the rudiments of his art. Sam Hills at cricket—a noble pose!

"When," he resumed, "the disheartened villagers came back after their beer, I was still not out eighty-three, but they had got up a new plan of attack. One of them, quite the largest, clearly a bruiser, marched forward with clenched fists, saying that he wished to 'take me on at a different game. If,' he added, 'I can't knock your wicket down I can knock *you* down'; and as he certainly looked as if he could do so I did not give much further trouble. But we won in a trot."

His fondness for animals of all sorts is another of Sam Hills' genial characteristics. He has always been able to do pretty much as he liked with them; the sympathy has been reciprocal. Thus, at one time during his reign over the Old Surrey, he had a tame fox and a tame deer at the kennels. Both used to trot along with hounds at exercise, also lying and feeding with them: the warmest affection existed between that happy family. Hounds missed their fox and deer if the latter happened to be absent.

“They would no doubt have hunted with us,” Sam declared, “if we could have managed to have them out on those occasions, and they enjoyed sport as much as any of us.”

Fox hunting fox—on the principle of set a thief to catch a thief—might have provided some amusing experiences. It is a pity that Sam did not carry the experiment into practical effect. His badger stories, too, are what may be termed “extra.” But, alas! they do not come within the scope of this history.

To say that the name of Sam Hills will live as long as that of the Old Surrey hounds is simply to enshrine a platitude. He will never be forgotten in Surrey whilst men love fox-hunting; and we hope that they will always continue to do so. And now the veteran huntsman spends his declining years, the autumn of his life, in comfort and honour, seeing hounds occasionally, and surrounded by troops of friends. Surely a blessed consummation!

CHAPTER XII

THE PRESENT DAY

IT will be interesting to consider briefly the position of the Old Surrey pack at the present time ; and there are many notable points which offer themselves for illumination. They must be touched upon with a true sense of their significance. We find very different conditions prevailing, of course, as contrasted with those described in our earlier chapters. Hunting has vastly changed in Surrey, as elsewhere ; narrower limits are imposed by an inevitable law of progress, especially effective near a large city ; horses and hounds are no doubt as good as ever, foxes still continue to run gallantly, and men are prepared to ride straight when they get the chance. Yet, in certain districts, the chance does not, alas ! come to them as often as formerly. They are obliged to be content with fewer of the glorious gallops. We cannot “go,” so to speak, without a “country.”

Since the Sam Hills *régime* there have been several huntsmen connected with the Old Surrey. James Cockayne succeeded Sam Hills, and proved himself to be a thoroughly able man in every respect. He was generally liked, handled his hounds in the style of an artist, and treated his patrons to many brilliant runs.



MR. HENRY BOILEAU



He was followed by another talented huntsman, namely, Tom Attrill, who made a host of friends, and was indefatigable in the cause of sport. A hard worker and a first-class horseman, he may certainly be ranked amongst the best of our professional huntsmen. He was very patient in the field, only assisting his hounds when necessary, perfectly efficient in kennel, and quite a master on the horn. It was delightful to hear him. He had a musical but not powerful voice; and he fulfilled his duties in such a way as to give general satisfaction. The reason why Attrill left the Old Surrey was that he had arranged to go back to the Vine when Mr. Russell again became Master of that pack. C. Wesley followed Attrill, and did fairly well until Mr. Boileau, the present Master, assumed the reins of government. That event occurred four seasons ago.

Since that time Mr. Boileau has always hunted the hounds himself, and has proved that he is thoroughly competent in that capacity. His heart is in the work, so to speak; he leaves no stone unturned to promote its success; and he is—dare we say?—exceptionally keen on “blood.” Mr. Boileau was elected to the position of Master in 1903, having previously gained a great deal of hunting experience in Cheshire, also with stag-hounds in Sussex. He is a light-weight, rides well to hounds on thoroughbred horses, and is always “right there” when wanted. He has maintained the best traditions of the pack by careful breeding, and has been very successful at the different hound shows in the county. Since his

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Mastership the sport has shown an improvement ; the number of foxes annually handled has been considerably above the average of late years.

Unfortunately, however, foxes are not so plentiful at present in certain districts of the Surrey territory as they used to be, for the shooting interest is acquiring predominance, with the unsatisfactory result indicated. Some large coverts are repeatedly drawn blank.

Yet, despite that fact, the Hunt continues to be well supported, and its members show no lack of enthusiasm. They treat difficulties lightly, with the true sporting spirit. They deserve all the good runs they get and more for their patience and unswerving devotion. They make the most of their gallops.

In the northern parts of the Old Surrey country bricks and mortar and wire render hunting practically impossible. One may anticipate an extension of that development ; it seems to be inevitable. Even so, these hounds are not actually cramped for want of country : if foxes were better preserved, results would be infinitely brighter.

The present average number of the field is quite equal to, if not above, that of former years. Many of the ancient supporters remain staunch in their allegiance to the Old Surrey ; they still hunt with these hounds, and have obviously lost no part of their early dash. There is also an adequacy of new blood. The sporting instinct is not easily daunted by a few topographical discomforts.

So as to give an account of a typical modern run with the Old Surrey, and to bring our records up to date, we

cull from the "Field" of 14 January, 1904, the subjoined report, written by a supporter of these hounds :—

"Several excellent runs have lately been scored with the Old Surrey, and the 10th inst. proved an exceptionally good day. The fixture was at Kingswood Warren, and a move was made to Outwood, which was expected to supply a fox, but on this occasion it proved tenantless. On hounds being taken to Highurst, however, they found directly, and slipped away at a pace which at once proclaimed a rare scent. Through the Warren and down the hill they raced to Mugswell and Gatwick Farm, pointing towards Upper Gatton ; but, swinging to the right, hounds carried the line up some double hedgerows to Manor Farm and over the Reigate Road to Margery Wood, when a slight check enabled a good many who had been left behind to nick in again. Hounds quickly hit off the line, and away we went along the top of the Betchworth Hills, where our fox was viewed not far ahead. Skirting the top of the Lime Pit, and leaving the Hermitage on the right, the line led us over the Pebble Hill road to Betchworth Clump, where a sharp turn over the Box Hill road made it appear as though the fox had been headed. But no check occurred, and, passing the Hand in Hand, hounds pushed on to Birch Grove and Bullinwood. Here, on the outskirts of Box Hill, we had our first real check, and horses were glad of it, as we had been going for just on forty minutes, and unfortunately, as often happens, scent suddenly failed. Although hounds patiently tried to work out the line of

The Old Surrey Fox Hounds

our fox, now dodging, they were at last obliged to give up. The point made was a six-mile one, and hounds ran quite seven or eight. It was a long trot back into our own country, as the run extended nearly the whole distance into the territory of the Surrey Union; and there were not more than a dozen of the field left when we reached Banstead Park, the starting point of another run which quite eclipsed that of the morning, both in pace and country. We found at once in Mr. Garton's park, hounds bustling their fox out over the railway and through Chiphouse Wood before some of us realized that they were gone. A slight turn enabled us to get on terms with them again as they raced through Outwood, not dwelling an instant, and streaming on to Shabden Park. Leaving Chipstead Church on the left, we followed as best we could in the wake of hounds down the slope over the Brighton Road, and up over the Merstham Tunnel; but, by this time, most of our horses had had enough, and one by one dropped out. Hounds, however, never checked for a moment, and those few whose horses had a bit left in them struggled on after the disappearing pack. Doubling back over the road at Merstham, the fox waited in Boorsgreen Wood, and narrowly escaped the jaws of the pack, but, slipping out, made for Cold-roast Farm, and back towards Shabden Park. Unfortunately he was headed, and turning right-handed crossed the road close to Chipstead Church. It was now almost dark, and as there were only the whipper-in and three of us left, and we could scarcely get a trot out of our tired

horses, we decided to stop, having been going fast for just an hour with one slight check. The day was so good that it only wanted blood—which hounds richly deserved—to make it complete.”

The following report is taken from the “Field” of 13 January, 1906:—

“It is a pleasure to record that the followers of these hounds have lately enjoyed some capital runs, and up to now the sport shown has been a marked improvement even upon that of last season, which was far above the average. A remarkable day (Saturday) was in store for those who attended the fixture at the Victoria, Banstead, whence a move was made to the Downs, where an outlying fox had been reported on several occasions. But this morning the gorse proved tenantless; so after drawing Solomans and Scratch Woods blank, hounds were trotted on to Banstead Park, the seat of that good friend to the hunt, Mr. Garton. Almost immediately, a fox broke covert overlooking Mr. Martin’s farm, and, skirting the hillside, crossed the railway as if for Outwood, but a slight check occurred in the Kingswood lane; then quickly hitting off the line again, hounds carried on through Chiphouse Wood, out by the barn, and away at best pace through Highurst, over the road into Kingswood Warren. Here it was that the Master had what looked like a serious fall, his horse putting his feet in a rabbit-hole and rolling completely over his rider; but it was a relief to see him pick himself up. Hounds meanwhile were pushing their fox through the Warren, past the stables, over the fence,

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to Walton Heath, and it looked as if Margery Wood was to be his next point, but either his heart failed or he was headed, for after running some distance on the common he turned back into the Warren, where he was killed, after a capital hunt of forty minutes. What followed will long remain fresh in the memory of those few who had the good fortune to be with the pack, until, after running for two hours, they raced away in the gathering gloom, and it was not until next day that one learnt that the second whipper-in, while scouring the country, met with the pack, still running in the moonlight, stopped them, and brought them home alone.

“This extraordinary run commenced at Boor’s Green, whence at 2.45 a large rough-looking fox stole away at the far end. Hounds were thrown into covert almost immediately, and, owing to the high wind, Gosden’s tally-ho was unheard by many, who therefore had a bad start. Crossing Boor’s Green Lane the fox headed as if for the hills over the Merstham road, but turning left-handed was viewed crossing a swede field to Coldroast, whence he sunk the valley to Purbright, crossing the Chipstead Lane, into Shabden Park. Here he twisted and dodged, causing a delay, but a holloa back soon put matters right, and carrying the line over the Brighton road, hounds were again pushing on across Dean Farm to Grasscut Wood, through which they ran, throwing up, however, in a wheat field beyond. A considerable check occurred here, and it looked like leaving this fox for another day as it was growing late, when hounds hit off



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the line again, and hunted slowly across Mr. Wright's farm into Chaldon Wood. Up to this point they had been running slowly, and for the most part down wind, but now a change came over the scene, for a welcome view put them on terms with their fox again, and away they went at a fast improving pace along the Dens for a mile, to the edge of Farthing Down, when, with a sharp left-handed turn over Chaldon lane, the bitches were on the grass screaming away up wind at racing pace back towards Grasscuts. This was the last the majority of the field saw of them, as a big fence with wire in it necessitated a detour, which in this case was hopeless. A few, however, surmounting the difficulty by the aid of wire cutters or the probability of a fall, galloped hard after the fast disappearing pack, a glimpse of them in the dusk as they hovered for a moment at Grasscuts being the last seen of them; the rest was by sound and information received *en route*, as followers could hear them running hard back to Boor's Green, where this good fox was found. On reaching this point the few survivors found that hounds had been gone ten minutes in the direction of Upper Gatton, which they had just touched, and were still running hard, but in which direction was uncertain. Further pursuit was hopeless, as it was now 4.45, nearly dark, nothing could be heard, and horses had had enough. Three of the field while standing in the lane below Upper Gatton, listening for any sound which might give some clue to the direction of hounds, perceived by the light of the rising moon a travel-stained weary fox crossing a

field close by in the direction of Boor's Green. They holloaed, but only echoes answered, so they separated, and went home. From the find until followers left the pack still running at Upper Gatton the time taken was just two hours, and the farthest point shown on the map five miles, and hounds ran between ten and eleven, the last half hour being done at racing pace. It transpired afterwards, as already stated, that the second whipper-in met hounds close to the suspension bridge at Reigate Hill, running back in the direction of Upper Gatton, when he managed to stop them."

The present *personnel* of the Hunt staff is sufficiently effective. The first whip and kennel huntsman is Charles Gosden, who comes from a well-known hunting family, his brother at the present time hunting the Meynell; and he is, therefore, as may be said, "bred to the game." His hounds are turned out in fine condition; he does as much for them as it is possible to do; he is a skilful performer in the pigskin.

The second whip is Dick Froude, who is a splendid horseman, and a sort of universal favourite. He is a cheery little chap, and not only understands his work, but does it thoroughly. He is always in the right place, and when hounds are running is never left behind.

Mr. G. N. Murton, who has acted as secretary for two seasons, continues to hold that office, in which he gives general satisfaction.

During the past season (1905-6) the sport shown by these hounds may be thus briefly summarized: 37½ brace

of foxes found, 17½ brace killed or run to ground. Hunted on sixty-four occasions, with six blank days during the season—four during cubbing.

With regard to the future of these hounds—a subject which is now attracting a little incidental consideration, and which we wish to treat as delicately as possible—one need not cultivate pessimistic views. There is a vast amount of consolation in hoping for the best, especially when the worst seems to be a remote contingency. But it is useless to ignore certain pressing facts. Thus, with the continued increase of building operations now to be noted in this district, the greater prevalence of wire, changes in the sporting element, emigration of old sporting residents farther afield, the advent of a more urban class who are not necessarily good sportsmen, the destruction of coverts, the erection of large, unpicturesque asylums which are little better than a blot on the landscape, the steady growth of population, the increasing prevalence of syndicate shoots—all these facts (and there is no getting away from their significance) are likely to have an inimical influence on the future prosperity of these hounds. It is surprising, indeed, considering the difficulties which they have to contend against, that they are able to show such consistent sport as they do under existing circumstances. We never know when we are going to be in for a “good thing”—a fast forty minutes on the grass perchance with a kill in the open. If we can taste that bliss occasionally we have no right to complain.

Having regard to the antiquity of this pack, and to the fact that they have provided a great deal of genuine hunting history during the last century and a half, we are inclined to believe that they will be able to triumph over difficulties which, just now, seem to be formidable enough. The sporting spirit of the district is meritorious, and is not likely to be extinguished. The love of hunting is still a potent influence in the right direction.

Hounds, horses, and men are eager to go ; foxes, if not so numerous as formerly, often give us a nice gallop where the "lepping" is delightful : we do *not* want to be wiped off the face of the earth because it has changed a little to our disadvantage. All we ask for is a fair field (barring wire) and no favour. It will be a pity then if we cannot hold our own in this line as our forefathers have done, and continue to worship fox-hunting as they did—with unquenchable enthusiasm. So, hoping always for the best, we may fittingly conclude with a pious aspiration, to wit : May it be many a long day before the music of hounds and the sound of the horn cease to be heard in the Old Surrey country !

THE END

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